Independence and Deference: A Study of the West Riding Electorate, 1832–1841

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Abstract

The importance of the Great Reform Act and its positive effect upon the development of popular, participative politics has recently been challenged. This study seeks to rehabilitate the 1832 Act and to examine the consequences of this major piece of franchise reform upon the electorate of the West Riding of Yorkshire. The central focus is the twin themes of independence and deference; the two are not necessarily opposing forces. Both were essential elements in the electoral politics of the region and both had clearly defined and demonstrable boundaries.

The region under investigation, the West Riding, portrayed a range of electoral experiences in the early nineteenth century and thus provides an important local case-study which can add a further dimension to perceptions of electoral politics in the nation as a whole. A comparative examination is made of the pre-existing small boroughs of the West Riding; the smaller new boroughs under varying degrees of influence; the large independent boroughs and the county electorate. The thesis concentrates on the voting populations of these constituencies — an analysis of over forty thousand individuals. A separate chapter is devoted to a psephological appraisal of the West Riding electorate which emphasises the voters' heightened motivation, partisanship and participation in the decade after 1832. In addition, other players in the electoral politics of the period are incorporated into this assessment. The unenfranchised used the knowledge and the confidence that they had gained from the reform agitation in the early eighteen-thirties to enhance their role in the early post-reform elections. The policy issues which dominated the hustings of West Riding in that decade were centred around demands from the working classes for social and political reform. Much of the initiative was wrested away from candidates, voters and patrons and focused upon the canvassing and campaigning of those without the vote. The position of the electoral patrons is also examined with a particular focus on female patrons

and electoral politics in the West Riding. Finally, the processes and procedures of electoral politics are investigated including a survey of the men who stood for parliament, the substance of their campaigns, the political parties and the ceremony and ritual of elections.

Acknowledgements

Historians are like jackdaws, gathering up jewels of information and storing them up for future use. Unlike the birds, however, they are at least able to acknowledge the many and varied sources of help and advice. Any piece of research is thus essentially a collaborative effort with assistance coming from many sources and this one is no different. Of central importance to this study has been the knowledge and expertise of the local history librarians and archivists of the many public and private libraries, local collections and archives that have been consulted. I would especially like to thank the archivists who have freely exchanged their knowledge of uncatalogued collections with me, often enabling me to uncover valuable sources of information. The analysis and management of the database of West Riding voters has been a major undertaking and I would like to thank members of the Association for History and Computing for their help and advice, particularly Professor R J Morris for his contribution of a machine-readable version of the Leeds poll book of 1832. My colleagues at the University of Warwick have offered unfailing support and have nursed me prodigiously through the latter stages of the thesis. My supervisor, Professor W A Speck has been a mentor and friend throughout the project and essential to its successful completion. On the home front I must thank my parents, my family and child-carers who have given me practical (and often intellectual) assistance. Tom has cheerfully allowed the West Riding electorate into his home and has been an unpaid IT consultant to the thesis. Finally, I must acknowledge Tess who has freely given me valuable lessons in time management and who has unwittingly shared her whole life with this project.

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The 1832 Reform Act and the West Riding

June 7th 1832 was a red letter day for the population of the West Riding. The news that the Reform bill had finally received the royal assent was greeted with exhilaration. The *Sun Express* newspaper had distinguished itself by conveying the news of the various votes on the bill from London to Edinburgh, each time at a cost of one hundred and sixty pounds. On the day of the final vote, the paper left London at 3.00 am, arriving in Wakefield at 8.00 p.m., where 'the church bells began to ring... bands of music paraded the streets until midnight and illuminations were exhibited in nearly every house and shop'.[1] In Sheffield the good tidings merited a public holiday with 'the ringing of bells, the firing of cannon, flying of flags and the pouring into the town on every side of persons from the county'. There was a triumphant march through the town led by the members of the Sheffield Political Union, over two and a quarter miles in length.[2] The distinguished Sheffield poet, Ebenezer Elliott published a hymn to celebrate the new act comparing the enfranchisement of the new boroughs to the emancipation of the slaves:

> No paltry fray, no bloody day
> That Crowns with praise, the baby great
> The Deed of Brougham, Russell, Grey
> The Deed that's done, we celebrate!
>
> Mind's great charter! Europe saved!
> Man for ever unenslaved
>
> Oh! Could the wise, the brave, the just
> Who suffered — died — to break our chains
> Could Muir, could Palmer, from the dust
> Could murdered Gerald hear our strains

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[1] J W Walker, *Wakefield. Its History and People,* 2 volumes (Wakefield, 1939), volume 2, p. 548 .

[2] *An Account of the Public Rejoicings in Sheffield to Celebrate the Passing of the Reform Bill* (Sheffield, 1832).

Then would martyrs, thron'd in bliss
See all ages bless'd in this.[3]

The West Riding profited greatly from the Reform Act. After 1832 the district returned a total of sixteen members of parliament: two for the new 'county' constituency of the West Riding, two each for the boroughs of Bradford, Halifax, Knaresborough, Leeds, Pontefract, Ripon and Sheffield and one for Huddersfield and Wakefield. Prior to 1832, the West Riding's representation had been included in the county constituency of Yorkshire and there had been five boroughs — Knaresborough, Pontefract, Ripon, Aldborough and Boroughbridge — the two latter were disenfranchised by the Reform Act. (See Figure 1.1) The West Riding was, after 1832, one of the best represented regions in the country.[4] The image of a conglomeration of boroughs, a 'continuum of towns', with the imagery of chimneys belching out smoke, grim factories and colliery tip-heaps is a caricature of the reality of the West Riding in the eighteen-thirties.[5] The scenery of the area includes river valleys, mountains, moorlands, rich farm and park lands as well as the textile, coal and steel districts of the industrial towns. Even manufacturing centres such as Sheffield could contain extensive areas of green park land. The urban centre of Bradford was situated in a bowl surrounded by villages and rough pasture-land. The narrow, urban streets of the region, closely packed with terraced housing, were never far away from the dramatic, rural scenery. At the same time, there was the impression of segregated urban and agricultural districts and of whole classes of people separated and distinct from their rural neighbours.

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[3] *Local Register and Chronological Account of Occurrences and Facts connected with the town and neighbourhood of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1832).

[4] Best represented in terms of number of constituencies rather than number of MPs in relation to population. Thus Yorkshire as a whole had seventeen boroughs — nine of them in the West Riding — whilst in comparison, Lancashire had eleven and Devonshire nine. C R Dod, *Electoral Facts from 1832 to 1853 Impartially Stated,* new edition, edited by H J Hanham (Brighton, 1972).

[5] A Raistrick, *The Making of the English Landscape: The West Riding of Yorkshire* (London, 1970), p. 152.

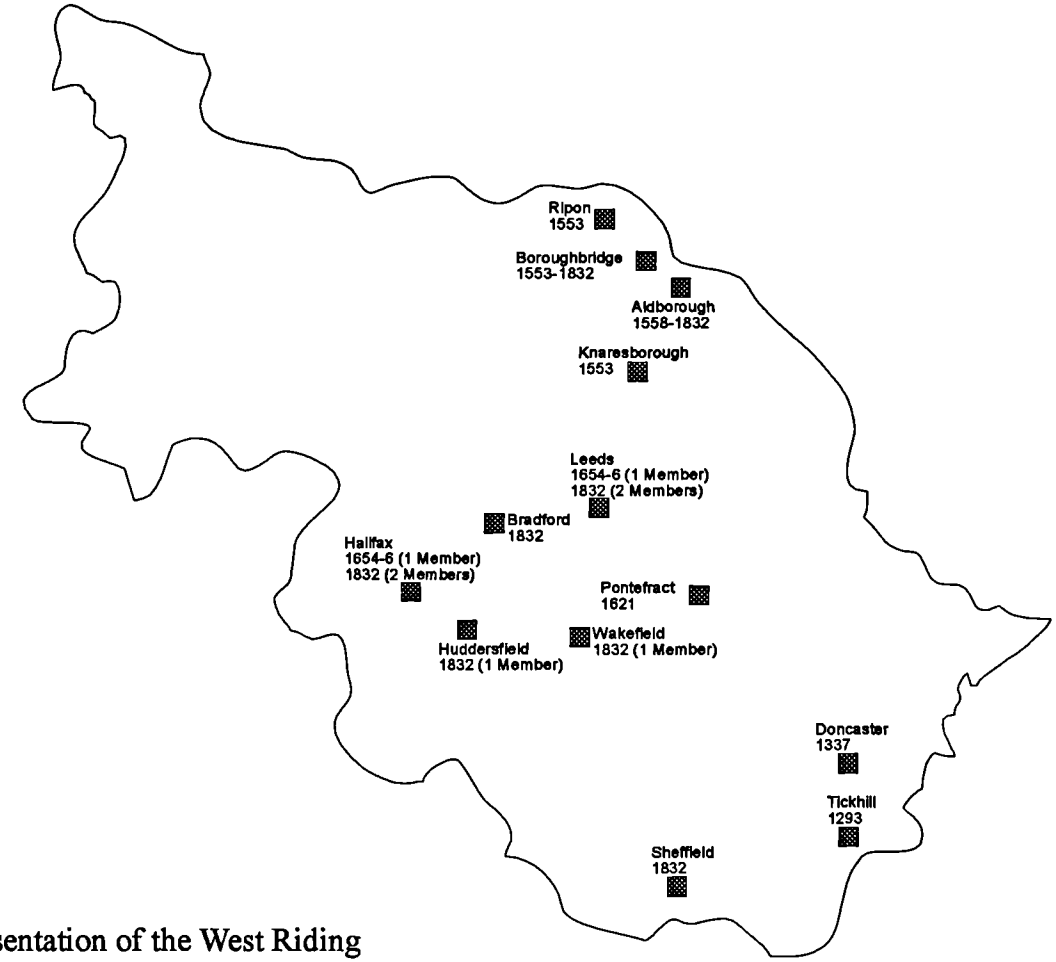

Figure 1.1 The Parliamentary Representation of the West Riding

The boundary commissioners who designed the new constituencies of 1832, included both urban and rural districts in the new parliamentary boroughs of the West Riding; often to the chagrin of local landowners:

> I cannot help being most anxious for the following alterations; and without which I confess I cannot altogether approve or promise to support their whole bill... how desirable it would be to confine the election of such places as Huddersfield to the precincts of the town — or at any rate not beyond the township — unless it is to take in a part of the suburb [Lockwood] which lies just across the river and in the parish of Almondbury — it would never do to take in more of Almondbury than Lockwood for in the whole of the West Riding I am sorry to say there is not to be found so notorious and radical a Population as that parish contains... it really will be very absurd and troublesome to canvass Marsden eight miles from Huddersfield and all the other townships in the parish which lie in a moorish, wild country and full of the wildest inhabitants unconnected with Huddersfield...[6]

The motives of the boundary commissioners were mixed. Sometimes they wished to counter the influence of a particular landlord or group of landowners, as was the case with Sir James Ramsden in Huddersfield. A similar tactic was used in Pontefract to counter the Galway-Mexborough interest. The size of the borough before 1832 was 4.2 square miles; after 1832 it had been enlarged to 11.9 square miles.[7] Sometimes the intention was to include areas connected with the borough which fell outside its immediate confines. Thus the parliamentary constituency of Bradford included the suburbs of Bowling, Manningham and Horton, in order to include important textile districts.[8]

A study of the parliamentary representation of the West Riding in the eighteen-thirties, therefore is able to give an indication of the

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[6] Sheffield Archives, Wentworth Woodhouse MSS, G83/143b. 23 October 1831, Sir J Ramsden to Lord Milton.

[7] N Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation, 1830–1850* (London, 1953), p. 433.

[8] D G Wright, 'Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth century Bradford 1832–80, with special reference to Parliamentary elections', 2 volumes (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1966), volume 1, pp. 107–8.

Figure 1.2 The Population of the new constituencies of the West Riding, 1801-1841

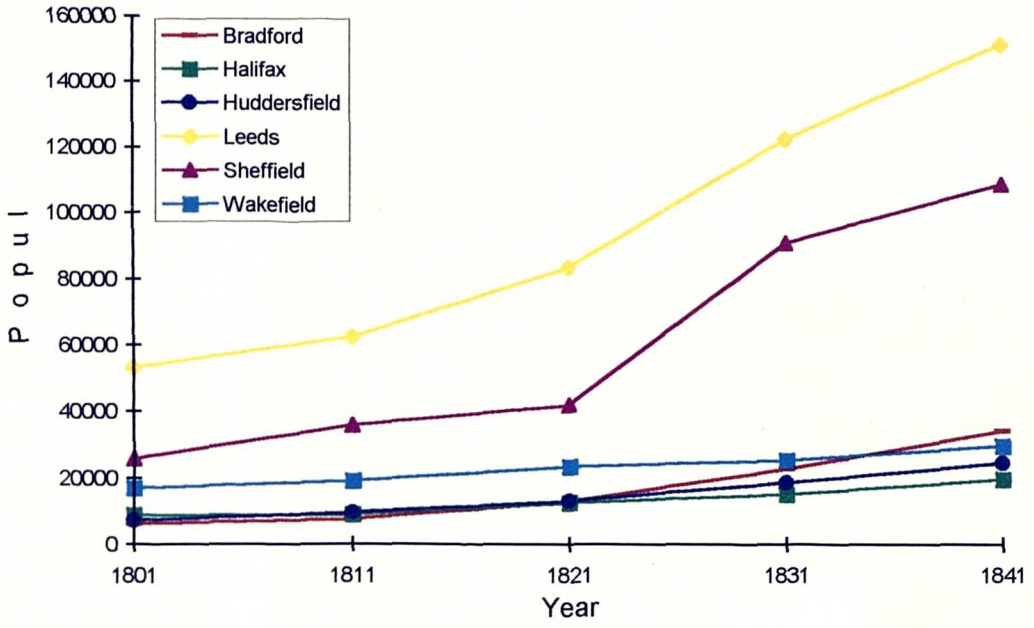
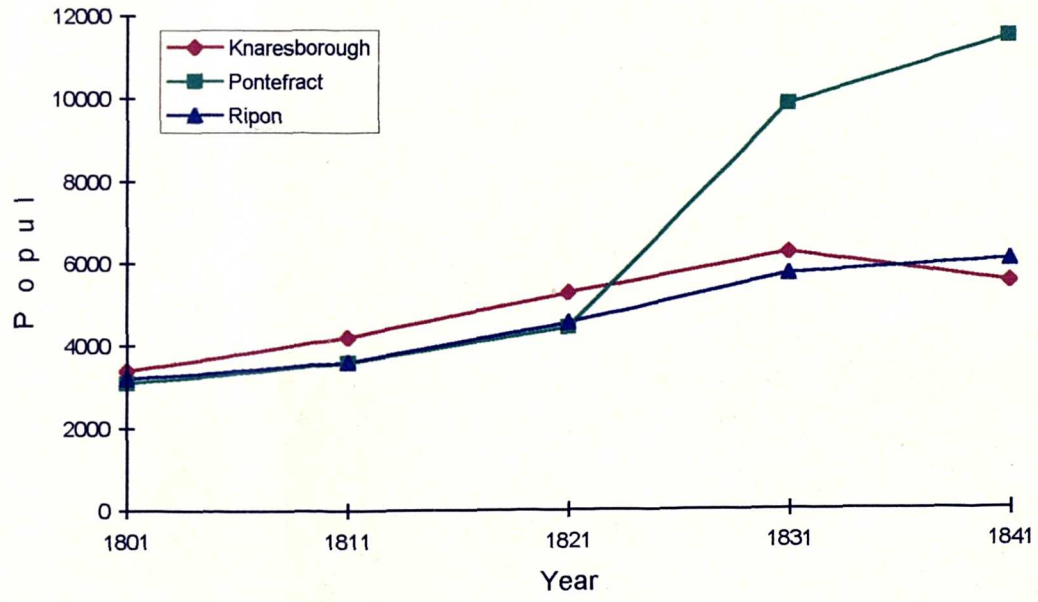


Figure 1.3 The Population of Knaresborough, Pontefract and Ripon, 1801-1841



idiosyncrasies of the political development of England as a whole during the early nineteenth-century. The parvenu manufacturing centres sprawled across the district; their boundaries abutting onto the hinterlands of rural market towns. The industries that were to form the cornerstone of Britain's economic advancement in the nineteenth century — coal, metal and textiles — complemented the bleak hill farms of the north-west of the county and the lowland pastures of the south and east. The hopes and desires of the rapidly enlarging populations of the newly enfranchised boroughs were placed alongside the fresh expectations (if tinged with weary cynicism) of the three boroughs that had sent MPs to parliament in the decades before 1832. (The population growth in the West Riding constituencies is illustrated in Figures 1.2 and 1.3) Factory politics, the aspirations of the radical dissenters, the hopes of the middle class and the political ambitions of the labouring poor all found a place in West Riding politics in the years after 1832. The county electorate — at around twenty thousand voters — was one of the largest in the country and together with the thirteen thousand voters of the nine boroughs can provide a formidable insight into early nineteenth century political opinion in the country. Of course, the representation of the West Riding of Yorkshire cannot accurately mirror that of the nation as a whole but as an extensive local study, it can bring fresh evidence to the many and varied interpretations of the impact of the 1832 Reform Act upon the nation's electorate.

The 1832 Reform Act has clung onto its epithet 'the Great Reform Act', despite a vigorous pummelling from twentieth century historians.[9] The debate centres around whether the Act ushered in a

[9] An early sceptic was Charles Seymour who in his pioneering study of 1915 highlighted the survival of aristocratic power and concluded that corruption worsened after 1832. C Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: the Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise, 1832–1885* (New Haven, 1915). More recent critics include Gash, *Politics in the Age of* Peel; F O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England, 1734–1832* (Oxford, 1989) pp. 384–393; the same author's, 'The Electorate Before and After 1832', *Parliamentary History*, (1993), pp. 171–183 and

new dawn for the early nineteenth century electorates. Should the euphoria of the new boroughs in the days after the passage of the bill through parliament be re-assessed once the excitement had subsided?[10] Should the actions of the Duke of Devonshire in renouncing his burgage votes in March 1832 or the victory of the reformers in the borough of Ripon, after decades of rule from Studley Royal, be foremost in the minds of historians; or should the emphasis instead be on a measure which allowed Knaresborough to retain its two members with an electorate of under three hundred and the re-establishment of patronal power in Ripon in the years after 1832?[11]

The opinion that the Reform Act was a beacon, symbolising the primacy of the middle classes in the nation has also been challenged. Victorian commentators such as Erskine May and Walter Bagehot, their views obfuscated by the reforming, progressive spirit of their age, have clearly over-stressed the importance of 1832 as a watershed in the political development of the country. Bagehot, for example in *The English Constitution*, summarised the 1832 Reform Act by stating simply that, 'the aristocracy and gentry lost their predominance in the House of Commons; that predominance passed to the middle class'.[12] The eighteenth century electorate was, in contrast, viewed as venal and corrupt, both by contemporaries and early analysts.[13] Recent analyses have, in contrast, placed the emphasis upon the enduring nature of aristocratic power; in these studies, the Reform Act is a mere tool, furnishing the established elites with the means necessary for their

J Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 31.

[10] This is the view of E A Smith, *Reform or Revolution? A Diary of Reform in England, 1830–1832* (Stroud, 1992), p. 141.

[11] For Knaresborough see, Chatsworth House, Devonshire MSS, uncatalogued Knaresborough documents and B Jennings (ed.), *A History of Harrogate and Knaresborough* (Huddersfield, 1970), pp. 354–58. For a detailed investigation of events in Ripon see Chapter IV below.

[12] W Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, cited in J Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857–1868* (London, 1966), pp. 1–2.

[13] T H B Oldfield, *The History of the Boroughs*, 6 volumes (London, 1794) and J Grego, *A History of Parliamentary Elections and Electioneering* (London, 1892).

survival.[14] This scholarship on the mid-nineteenth century constitution complements Clark's self-confessed 'revisionist tract' which argues for the persistence of the *ancien régime* in eighteenth century England, making England's political evolution similar to that of other European states.[15] Clark is sceptical of the existence of popular electoral politics in the eighteenth century. Other commentators have sought to extend the survival of this old regime into the twentieth century, ensuring that the study of early modern England can now be stretched from Tudor times to 1914.[16] When, to these analyses is added the work of economic historians who argue that Britain's industrial progress was far less revolutionary than previously assumed, the image of 1832 as a harbinger for the political advancement of the middle class appears severely dented.[17]

These views are surely parodies of the reality: an emphasis on continuity at all costs. Firstly, the motives of the Whig government in championing parliamentary reform have been revealed as positive, seeking to include the middle classes within the new constitution, rather than a defensive measure to sustain their own rule.[18] Their success in incorporating the middle classes into the political nation has even been regarded as a backward step, 'at the founding moment of

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[14] D C Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century Political System* (Brighton, 1976) and P Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830–1852* (Oxford, 1990).

[15] Although Clark views 1832 as an end-point. J C D Clark, *English Society, 1688–1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the ancien regime* (Cambridge, 1985).

[16] Arno Mayer, like Clark, stresses the similarities in the political and social structures of Europe, arguing that the 'old regime' survives up to 1914 using its dominance over government as the linchpin. A Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York, 1981). See also, H Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780–1880* (London, 1969).

[17] For the 'new' interpretations of the Industrial Revolution see N F R Crafts, *British Economic Growth During the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1985); E A Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge, 1989) and D Cannadine, 'The Present and the Past in the English Industrial Revolution, 1880–1980', *Past and Present* (1984).

[18] J Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform, 1640–1832* (Cambridge, 1972) and M Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London, 1973).

English liberty and democracy, it was the closure of democratic political forms, the stifling of a radical libertarian tradition, that was most evident'.[19] In this analysis, it is the very success of the middle class which it is alleged, acts as an end-stop for popular, participative politics. 1832 is therefore seen as a retrogressive step, slamming shut the portals of power to the mass of the population. Certainly, it can be argued that the representativeness of the electorate was little improved by the Act.[20] (See Figures 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6) The steady growth of the electorate in the new constituencies of the West Riding barely kept pace with the increase in the population. Indeed, the surviving constituencies were often initially better represented than the newly enfranchised boroughs because they included their existing franchises alongside the new ten pound householder qualification; although obviously their electorates were often reduced as the voters holding the old franchises died or moved away and were not replaced. But to compare the tiny electorates of Ripon and Knaresborough, however representative, with the thousands of voters in Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford is misleading and it is difficult to see how 1832 could be anything but a progressive step for the constituents of the newly enfranchised manufacturing centres.

The aristocracy obviously retained their power in the spheres where they had influence; to argue that aristocratic control disappeared overnight would be a deception. New proprietary boroughs — such as Huddersfield — were established, as the old ones were being disenfranchised. However, that continuation of patrician influence should be placed alongside the triumph of the new independent boroughs where the middle class were able to establish their own pockets of authority to counter-balance the social power of the rural aristocracy. The urban middle class, led by small elites, established

[19] Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 7.

[20] However the representative nature of the electorate should be placed alongside participation. For a more detailed discussion see Chapter III below.

Figure 1.4 The Electorate of the new constituencies of the West Riding, 1832-1841

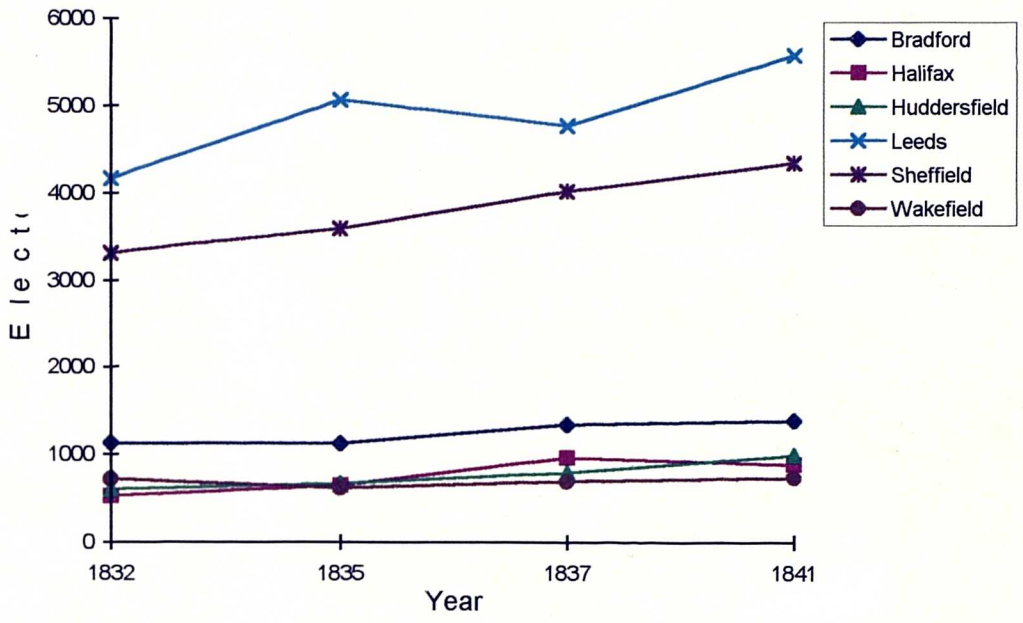


Figure 1.5 The Electorate of Knaresborough, Pontefract and Ripon, 1832-1841

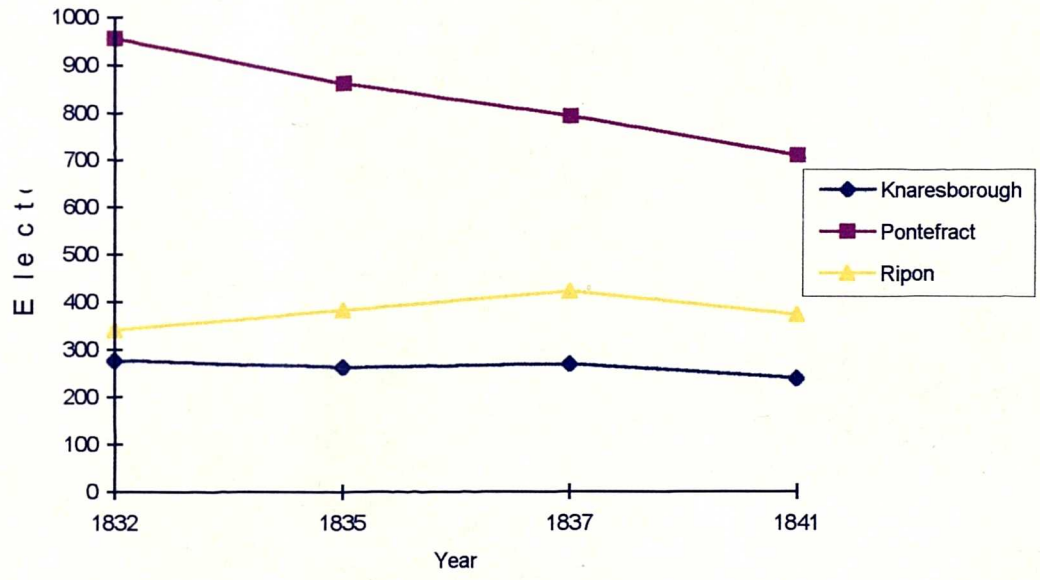
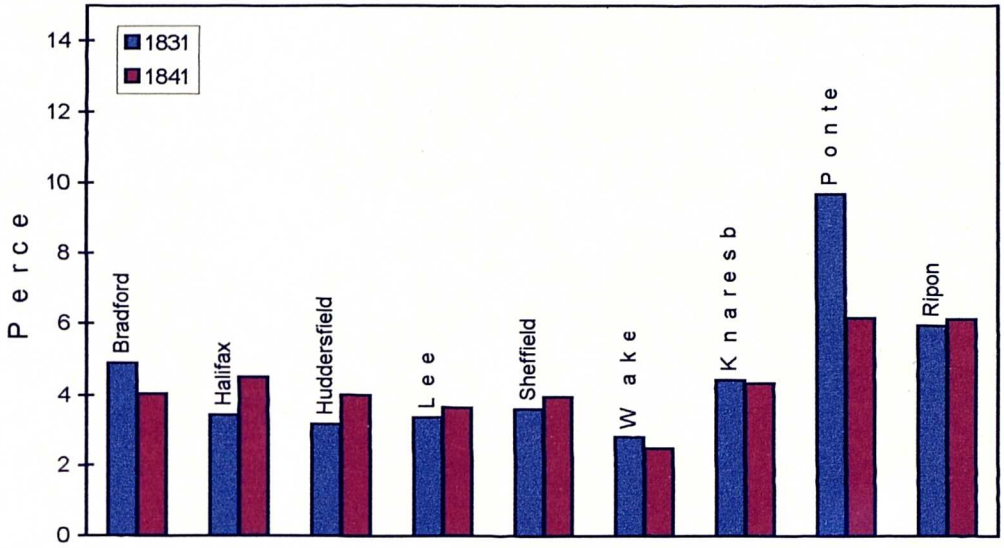


Figure 1.6 The Proportion of voters to the total population in the constituencies of the West Riding



their own social and cultural institutions, their own language and their own environment.[21] In this interpretation, the aristocracy were forced to change their behaviour to take into account this new force in British society and politics; rather than merely absorbing the middle class into their own ranks.

Secondly, the successful attempts to rehabilitate the eighteenth century electorate should not be necessarily used as a contrast with the post-reform position. The early accounts, which tarnished the reputation of the eighteenth century electorate, were supplemented by Namier and others, who concentrated upon a narrow cast of aristocratic politicians, ignoring the role of the people.[22] This view has now largely been discounted by the revolution in the study of the eighteenth century electorate initiated by Holmes and Speck and extended to the Hanoverian period, Namier's own area of analysis, by O'Gorman.[23] The argument of the Victorian whig commentators of the nineteenth century appears to be reversed by modern scholarship. The movement against the portrayal of the unreformed electorate as at worst venal and at best obedient now appears to be unfavourably contrasting the post-reform electoral system with that in the eighteenth century.[24]

There were many continuities between the unreformed and reformed system, as might be expected. The new voters adopted the procedures and rituals of the old; the patrons echoed the techniques of control and the people followed the path of popular electoral

[21] R J Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820–1850* (Manchester, 1990).

[22] L Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929).

[23] For the eighteenth century electoral system see especially, G Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of* Anne (London, 1967); W A Speck, *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies, 1701–1715* (London, 1970); J Brewer, *Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1976); J A Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters and Straights* (Princeton, 1982) and O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties.*

[24] O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 392–3.

participation discovered by their forefathers. However, there were also striking changes. One commentator has even claimed, 'reform quickly destroyed the political system that had prevailed during the long reign of George III and replaced it with an essentially modern electoral system based on rigid partisanship and clearly articulated political principle'.[25] Perhaps that is an exaggeration, but the eighteen-thirties were clearly a transitional decade in the annals of British political and electoral history.

This consideration of the West Riding electorate will focus on the twin themes of independence and deference; contrasting the political success of the middle classes in the large manufacturing centres with the continuation of patronal politics in the smaller boroughs. Throughout, the Reform Act is seen as a measure of success rather than failure. The independence movements in Ripon and Pontefract, for example were quickly and easily squashed but ensured subtle changes in the techniques of electioneering employed by the patrons. Proprietary control could no longer be taken for granted. The caution of the Ramsden family in Huddersfield was important; it signified that the hopes and expectations of the people had been raised and that popular feeling could not be brushed away. Deference continued to be a characteristic of the electoral system, but it was tempered by a spirit of independence. The great Victorian cities were established as new centres of power and authority, in contrast with the rural strongholds of the aristocracy.[26] It is no coincidence that three years after the Reform Act, the Municipal Corporations Act was passed, enabling many of the newly enfranchised boroughs to obtain formal control of their local institutions. The prevailing attitudes and

[25] J A Phillips and C Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the Political Modernization of England', *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), pp. 411–36. See also J A Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour, 1818–1841* (Oxford, 1992).

[26] D Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (Oxford, 1979) and *Urban Politics in Victorian England: The Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities* (Leicester, 1976).

concerns of the new industrial classes are reflected in the party rhetoric of the period; a new emphasis on national and international affairs began to emerge. Free trade and reform of the established church became the watchwords of the eighteen-thirties.

The Reform Act itself encouraged and developed important trends. Registration advanced the evolution of party political organisation; participation increased with the growth of the electorate, higher turnouts and the increase in the numbers of contested elections; the polarisation of politics during the reform crisis was reflected in the partisanship of the electorate. Women, despite the symbolic ending of their notional right to vote, were enthused rather than discouraged by the Reform Act and discovered methods by which they could participate in politics. In summary, popular politics was invigorated and refreshed by the Reform Act.

The political histories of the new constituencies of the West Riding have received detailed examination and this study does not attempt to replicate that work.[27] Comprehensive narratives of the passage of events and the *dramatis personae* can be found elsewhere. Instead the response of a particular *region* to the political challenges of the eighteen-thirties is investigated in detail. Those who have 'rehabilitated' the study of the industrial revolution have found refuge in regional surveys which display the particular local context of the industrial revolution within a wider national and international framework, countering the aggregated national statistics which

[27] For example, Wright, 'Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth century Bradford'; T Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, 1990); J A Jowitt, 'Parliamentary Politics in Halifax, 1832–1847', *Northern History* (1976); D Fraser, 'Politics in Leeds, 1830–1852', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1969); Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*; S A Richardson, 'A Study of the Sheffield Voters, 1830 to 1860', (unpublished MA thesis, University of Hull, 1986). This list is by no means exhaustive. For further references see later chapters.

emphasise continuity.[28] This interpretation of a region's political development seeks to place the West Riding electorate in its national context, comparing its experiences with those of other voters, but also emphasising its particular 'Yorkshire' identity.[29] The West Riding's preoccupation with factory reform in the eighteen-thirties, has, for example, been used as an indication of that area's unique economic and social development.[30] The projection of that issue onto the national stage, however, is an indication both of the wider remit of local politics and of the importance attached to issues affecting the industrialised districts in 'reformed' Britain.

The emphasis of this research into the West Riding electorate is focused on the voters themselves and utilises a database of over forty thousand individuals compiled from the extant West Riding county and borough poll books.[31] Attention is also given to the landowners and electoral patrons and to the unenfranchised, the working class and women who could not vote but who were able to find a role and to participate in the elections of this exciting decade. Diaries, letters and newspapers give individual case studies and under-exploited sources, such as collections of election ephemera add a further dimension.[32] The key to understanding the effect of the Reform Act upon a region such as the West Riding is not found merely by examining the electoral

[28] M Berg and P Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review* (1992); M Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700–1820: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain* (London, 1994) and P Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1989).

[29] The major studies of Victorian voters are J Vincent, *Poll Books: How Victorians Voted* (Cambridge, 1967), T J Nossiter, 'Voting Behaviour, 1832–1872', *Political Studies* (1968), pp. 380–9 and Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs.*

[30] J Langton, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Regional Geography of England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1984) and P Hudson, 'The Regional Perspective' in Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries*, p. 19.

[31] For an explanation of the methodologies used to manipulate the database see Appendix II.

[32] Thus, my investigation of the Bradford electorate makes great use of the Busfeild Ferrand MSS, a collection of election ephemera which is largely ignored by Wright, 'Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth Century Bradford' and Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-Industrial Society* in their analyses of the Bradford elections.

politics of the newly enfranchised boroughs. The established constituencies, Pontefract, Knaresborough and Ripon have received little scholarly attention for the decade after 1832 in comparison with their industrial neighbours. It is in these constituencies, however, that important aspects of the reform process can be discovered. To some extent, in all three boroughs, continuity between the old and the new was maintained. By 1841 the excitement which had accompanied the reform process had diminished and the boroughs were largely under patron control. This continuity was achieved at a price. The experiences of the towns during the reform crisis and its immediate aftermath and the injection of new blood into their electorates, with the addition of the ten pound householders; subtly changed the relationships between patrons and voters, the political parties and the electorate.

The Reform Act was a pivotal event in the political, economic and social development of the West Riding. The tentacles of the reform process extended to the county, the rural borough, and the urban-industrial electorate of the region. The central theme of this study is the vitality of these newly created or re-fashioned electorates who actively participated in the new political, post-reform world.

Chapter II

Of Men, Motivation and Methods

There was much uncertainty and anticipation in the months after the passage of the Reform Act about the changes that would be ushered in by that celebrated statute. Who would represent the new constituencies? How would the interests of the newly enfranchised electorates be translated onto the hustings during election campaigns? How would the practice of elections differ after 1832? There were not expected to be wholesale changes. After all, the Reform Act had been concerned with voters rather than electoral practices. Hopes of a new dawn, the end of 'old corruption' and rising expectations however, were encouraged by the politicisation of the populations of the industrial towns that had taken place during the reform agitation. It was amidst an atmosphere of rising excitement with a dash of fear and trepidation then that these early post-reform elections in the West Riding occurred.

The Politicians

Membership of the unreformed parliaments had been drawn from a very narrow pool.[1] The knights of the shires were invariably sons of the great aristocratic, political families; who were claiming their birthright and following the path trodden by generations of their families. To these men, the title, 'member of parliament', was an essential addition to those of Lord-lieutenant and magistrate and signified their leadership of the county's social and political institutions. Ownership of land was also an

[1] For more information on the memberships of eighteenth century parliaments, see the volumes of the *History of Parliament* and Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, pp. 1–61.

important prerequisite for the representation of borough interests and the so-called 'independent country gentlemen' had proved a formidable back-bench force throughout the eighteenth-century and indeed, into the early years of the nineteenth-century.[2] Land ownership did not only confer status; the landowner was also proprietor, employer, landlord and client. In a constitution, where the franchise was based on land and property, the more substantial landowners assumed their place as the natural leaders of the community.

There were places for others in parliament, but these professional, business and military men often possessed landed estates in addition to following their careers.[3] Predominant among the professional men were the lawyers; perhaps the reason for this was because of their abilities as debaters and public speakers, maybe because of the close connection between the courts of law and the parliament or even because of the benefits membership of the House brought in terms of career advancement.[4] The decline of government patronage after 1760 had diminished the numbers of placemen sitting in parliament and this affected the numbers of MPs who were actively following military careers; however, they remained a significant portion of the Commons. The proximity of Westminster to the City of London and the importance of monetary affairs to the history of parliament resulted in several financiers and bankers taking seats in the Commons. This chain of interest was seldom, however continued on to the creators of the country's wealth — the manufacturers and industrialists. Occasionally, sons of wealthy

[2] See, for example, D Beales, 'The Independent Member' in R Robson (ed.), *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain* (London, 1967), pp. 1–19.

[3] Thus, Namier writes of the soldiers sitting in the Commons, 'almost all of them belonged to families of social standing and half were sons of peers'. Namier, *The Structure of Politics*, p. 25. The same was true of those pursuing other professions.

[4] The law profession still provides a large proportion of members of parliament in the twentieth century. For example, around a third of the 1959 intake to the Commons were lawyers. J Blondel, *Voters, Parties and Leaders* (London, 1963), p. 140.

manufacturers, if they possessed enough wealth and talent, could attain membership of the House — Sir Robert Peel being a famous example — but the predominant view was that trade and politics did not mix. The first member of the Commons to sit for a county seat, who was a 'practising' industrialist was John Marshall, a millionaire owner of several Leeds' woollen mills, who became MP for Yorkshire in 1826. County opinion was aghast:

> John Marshall a county member for York. O fie! A yard band and spindles — and Mill Hill. Lord Milton to return two members for the county of York contrary to the sense and principles of this great, wise shire! My day is past, or I would nominate some old lady with her knitting pins and work bag as a candidate...[5]

This condescending attitude towards 'trade' on the part of county society was a major reason for the lack of industrialists in the Commons. Coupled with this was the remoteness — both geographically and in terms of shared concerns — of industry from the metropolis; and these proved powerful deterrents excluding the representatives of a major sector of the economy from the House.

If the agitators for reform had expected that any measure would have an effect on the membership of parliament, they were to be disappointed. The composition of the Commons after 1832 was little different from that of the parliaments of the eighteenth century. The Commons that assembled for the first parliamentary session after the passage of the Reform Bill consisted of army and naval officers, country gentlemen and the sons and relations of peers of the upper house. There were only thirty-three merchants and traders and thirty-six bankers.[6]

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[5] Kirklees Archives, Horsfall MS, DD/HF/1/25. 3 June 1826, Heald Hall, near Leeds. Hammond Robertson to Reverend Cookson.

[6] E Halevy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, 6 volumes (London, 1927), volume 3, pp. 62–4.

Table 2.1 Status of MPs and candidates for the West Riding, 1832–1841.[7]

Status	*All candidates(%)*	*MPs (%)*
Aristocracy	9.7	13.9
Gentry and Landowners	19.5	20.9
Lord-lieutenants/deputy lieutenants	38.9	55.8
JPs	37.5	55.8
Holding other public office	27.8	34.9
Law	18.1	23.3
Army/Navy	22.2	20.9
Banking	4.2	4.6
Writing/publishing	8.3	4.6
Education	4.2	2.3
Medicine	1.4	–
Diplomacy	2.8	2.3
Industry/trade	6.9	7.0

In the West Riding constituencies, there was little variation from the national pattern. (See Table 2.1) The gentry, landowners and aristocracy were dominant. It was essential that aspiring MPs should be able to prove themselves leaders of their respective communities; therefore in addition to possessing a title, it was also important for candidates to be able to display the badges of local office-holding. Over one-third of the candidates were Lord Lieutenants or deputy-lieutenants of a county; an equal number sat on the bench and just over one-quarter could add a further office-holding qualification to their *curriculum vitae*. In all cases, the proportions increased amongst those who were successful in winning seats and entering parliament. Thus over one-half of the MPs

[7] Note, the columns do not add up to one hundred per cent, because of candidates who could be described in a number of different ways. Sources: *Parliamentary Companion* (London, 1834); *Dictionary of National Biography*; M Stenton and F Lees (eds), *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament, 1832–1885* (Hassocks, 1976); and W W Bean, *The Parliamentary Representation of the Six Northern Counties of England* (Hull, 1886).

for the West Riding were also JPs. Of those following a career or profession, the most successful in achieving selection as parliamentary candidates were the lawyers and military men. Only six candidates were engaged in professions such as medicine, diplomacy and education; whilst industry, banking and trade which provided a large proportion of the wealth of the Riding could only muster around eight candidates out of the total.

There were differences between the two parties. (See Table 2.2) Both the Conservative and Liberal parties put an equal emphasis on the importance of office holding; but the Conservative candidates were weighted in favour of land-owning and military service, whilst the Liberals had a bias in favour of industry. These descriptors of the two parliamentary parties continued until the 1870s. For example, even in

Table 2.2 Status and party affiliations of candidates for the West Riding, 1832–1841.

Status	*Conservatives (%)*	*Liberals (%)*
Aristocracy	14.3	6.7
Gentry and Landowners	25.0	15.5
Lord-lieutenants/deputy lieutenants	39.3	37.8
JPs	35.7	37.8
Holding other public office	21.4	31.1
Law	17.9	17.8
Army/Navy	32.1	15.6
Banking	–	6.7
Writing/publishing	7.1	8.9
Education	3.6	4.4
Medicine	–	2.2
Diplomacy	3.6	2.2
Industry/trade	3.6	8.9

1875 the Liberal party was described as having 'a massive and homogenous landed right wing, amounting to half its numbers in England'.[8] The difficulty for the parties who wished to select merchants or manufacturers actively engaged in pursuing their trade was in persuading them to stand. Thus, Sir John Ramsden replying to a requisition from the townspeople of Huddersfield, calling on him or a member of his family to stand at the forthcoming election, urged them to select a local man:

> I strongly recommended that they should select someone from the Town or Neighbourhood, but they observed that it was impossible to meet with a person not occupied with his Trade...[9]

The difficulty was, that those men who were involved in establishing their industrial fortunes, could not afford the diversion — of either time or money — away from their business, that membership of parliament entailed. Of the five candidates in Table 2.1 who were described as industrialists and traders, three — Marshall, Lister and Gully — had begun to use their immense wealth to establish country estates on outskirts of the towns that had made their fortunes. Thus, it was only George Banks, a candidate for Bradford and Thomas Asline Ward, a candidate for Sheffield who were still directly, and solely, involved in their industrial enterprises. The experiences of Banks and Ward would not have encouraged other manufacturers to follow suit. They were both unsuccessful in their attempts to secure election to parliament, whereas Marshall, Lister and Gully who had deserted their trade for gentlemanly pursuits were victorious.

Ramsden's comment to the people of Huddersfield, betrays another factor which was considered to be vitally important in the selection

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[8] J Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857–1868* (London, 1966), p. 4. Between 1859 and 1875, Vincent notes that around one-fifth of the parliamentary Liberal party were businessmen (including professionals and bankers). There were also eighty-four lawyers.

[9] Ramsden MSS, DD/RA/F27. 28 August 1832, Sir John Ramsden to J C Ramsden.

process — that the candidates should be local men. There was a deep suspicion of candidates who could not display local knowledge or point to their connections with local families. The main fear was that 'place-men' who were strangers to the area, would be foisted upon the constituency by those exercising undue influence over the boroughs. For example, the Liberal candidates in the 1832 election of the nomination borough of Ripon, made much of their local origins, being described as 'both near neighbours to the town and representatives of families held in high respect throughout the county'.[10] This was contrasted with the two 'military martinets', General Sir Charles Dalbiac and Colonel Markham, who were the nominees of Mrs Lawrence of Studley Royal and resided in Cornwall and London, respectively. In 1835, Markham was replaced as the Studley nominee, by Thomas Pemberton, a London barrister. On this occasion the *Leeds Mercury* commented that 'they [Dalbiac and Pemberton] will no more represent the electors of Ripon than Sierra Leone'.[11] The issue of outsiders being imported in to represent the views of the local landowner as opposed to the opinions of the town was summarised by Staveley, the Liberal candidate for the borough in 1832 and 1835:

> The re-ascendancy of the Studley interest thus secured, the borough relapsed into precisely its position before the passing of the Reform Bill. In 1837, *two* Lincoln's-inn men were returned, just as they had been in 1830 and 1831. At a subsequent period the place supplied a seat to Sir George Cockburn, and it afterwards had the felicity of returning the *Bombastes Furioso* Attorney-General for Ireland, Mr A B C Smith. With the exception of Mr Pemberton, who is a man of noble impulse and a warm heart, scarcely one of the members ever conferred the slightest benefits on the town or its inhabitants — none of them were known or cared for, or obtained in the most remote degree the sympathies or affections of the people. In fact, Ripon and its people were never represented except during the three occasions when Messrs. Staveley or Crompton sat in parliament. Studley was represented before, and it has been ever since....[12]

[10] Yorkshire Archaeological Society Archives, Staveley papers, DD115/26. Liberal campaign poster.

[11] *Leeds Mercury*, 10 January 1835.

[12] Staveley MSS, DD115/26. Account by Staveley.

The tactic of decrying 'outside' candidates was also used in the county contests. In 1841, John Stuart Wortley, the Tory candidate, had the temerity to attack Lord Morpeth; 'send this nominee back to Castle Howard. Reject this northern intruder who has not an acre in the West Riding'.[13] In the strictest sense of the word, Morpeth was not a local candidate. He resided at Castle Howard, in the foothills of the North Yorkshire moors; but Wortley was surely stretching the point in his attempt to capitalise upon the West Riding men's suspicion of strangers.

The new boroughs, which had been created by the 1832 Act were keen to differentiate themselves from the pocket and rotten boroughs of the past; to promote their local interests; and to use local men as a conduit for their opinions. Table 2.3 demonstrates the contrast between the 'old' and new boroughs after 1832. They are almost mirror images of each other — over two-thirds of the candidates of the constituencies which had existed before 1832 came from outside the county, whereas the opposite is true of the new, industrial constituencies.

Table 2.3 Provenance of candidates for boroughs of the West Riding, 1832–1841

Pre–1832 constituencies		*New constituencies*	
Local	*Non-local*	*Local*	*Non-local*
30.4	69.6	68.9	31.1

[13] Huddersfield Archives, Tomlinson MSS, no. 84. Tory campaign poster, 1841.

There was a temptation for the new boroughs, however, to select a famous name from outside the locality, in order to make a national splash and to emphasise the importance of the constituency. The Liberals of Bradford, Sheffield and Leeds were all attracted by the charms of such external candidates and in every case they were to regret their choices. In 1834, the Liberals of Bradford invited George Hadfield to represent them, hoping to free the town from the conservatism of the sitting MPs, Hardy and Lister. Hadfield was a leading campaigner for the rights of dissenters and head of a college for the education of nonconformist ministers in his home town of Manchester. The Liberals' choice caused a great furore in the town and the Tories passed a resolution declaring it 'an insult to the borough... to force upon the constituents of this borough an entire stranger to the town and county'.[14] This argument appears to have swayed the electorate and Hadfield came bottom of the poll in the 1835 election and was advised not to stand again by the local Liberal committee.[15] In 1832 and 1835, Sheffield was represented by James Silk Buckingham, a flamboyant lecturer and campaigner for the temperance cause. The *Sheffield Iris* described him as a 'brilliant radical... strikingly different to Sheffield men whose weaknesses and faults we know well'.[16] In Sheffield, as in Bradford, the Tories cautioned against returning an outside candidate; this time to no avail. Buckingham's eccentric conduct in Parliament, which included voting with the Conservatives on several occasions led the Liberals to regret their choice.[17] The Leeds' Whig-Liberals chose Thomas Babington Macaulay as their candidate to run alongside the local industrialist John Marshall junior in 1832. Edward Baines, the proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*, had suggested Macaulay when he had founded, with Marshall, 'The Leeds Association for the Free

[14] *Leeds Mercury*, 22 November 1834.

[15] For further discussion of the Bradford elections, see Chapter V below.

[16] *Sheffield Iris*, 20 January 1835.

[17] See Chapter V below.

Return of Fit Representatives to Parliament' in 1831.[18] It was argued that Macaulay, as a rising political star, would confer honour and fame upon the constituency. These sentiments were echoed nine years later when Thomas Hill, investigating for the borough in 1841 the candidature of William Aldam, wrote to his father, stating, 'Leeds borough looks up to its members for great things'.[19] The Tories attacked Macaulay as 'a ministerial turnspit' and a place-man. They implied that Baines was keen to ensure that the Londoner was returned because Macaulay had offered his sons jobs as a reward.[20] Although Macaulay was elected in 1832, within eighteen months he had left the borough, taking up office in India at the request of the Whig government. His departure caused a by-election, in which the local credentials of all the candidates were emphasised.[21] Ironically, Baines, who had been the prime mover in ensuring that Macaulay was selected as a candidate for Leeds, was the main beneficiary of his withdrawal, being narrowly elected by twenty-four votes.

In general the constituencies of the West Riding after 1832 appeared to have been carved up between the representatives of the major political, aristocratic families and career professionals for whom a seat in parliament was a necessary step to be taken on the ladder of ambition. Several borough constituencies, in addition to the county, returned members of the foremost noble dynasties of the region. Political networks, the calling in of favours and the pulling of strings proved vitally important for securing a Lascelles a seat at Wakefield; for a Stuart Wortley to be returned for Halifax and for a Monckton Milnes to triumph at Pontefract.[22]

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[18] C Driver, *Tory Radical, The Life of Richard Oastler* (New York, 1976), p. 178.

[19] Wakefield Archives, Aldam MSS, uncatalogued. 21 July 1841, Thomas Hill to William Aldam senior, Warmsworth Hall, Doncaster.

[20] *The Cracker*, 29 November 1832. D Fraser, 'The Fruits of Reform: Leeds Politics in the Eighteen-thirties', *Northern History*, 13 (1977), pp. 89–111, p. 90.

[21] Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, pp. 129–30.

[22] Lascelles was the son of the Earl of Harewood; Stuart Wortley the son of the Earl of Wharncliffe and Monckton Milnes the nephew of Lord Galway.

These men, the sons and nephews of the powerful, peers of the realm were pre-destined to achieve parliamentary success. Lawyers such as John Blackburne and Thomas Babington Macaulay; soldiers such as Sir James Charles Dalbiac and diplomats such as Henry Ward and David Urquhart were also able to use their parliamentary careers for personal advancement. Blackburne for example, shortly after his selection as the Ramsden nominated candidate at Huddersfield, was appointed head of the Royal Commission to enquire into the state of municipal corporations, which led to the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835.[23] Macaulay, after his appointment to the Council of India in 1834, became secretary to the India Board, a member of the East India Company's supreme court at Calcutta, was its legal advisor and prepared a penal code for India.[24] There was, however, amidst this scramble for seats which would lead to political advancement for their holders, room for the genuine native, radical campaigners. Men such as Richard Oastler and John Gully, mavericks who were detested by the political establishment in Yorkshire, used their *local* influence and *local* popularity to challenge entrenched interests — in Oastler's case the predominance of the Ramsden family and in Gully's, the joint control of the Galway and Mexborough interests.

Party Politics in the West Riding

In the eighteen-thirties the borough and county constituencies of the West Riding acted as a huge, party political melting-pot in which various blends of Whiggism, Liberalism, Toryism and radicalism were paraded before the general population and, more importantly, in front of the electors who would make the ultimate choices. All political parties

[23] *Huddersfield Examiner*, 9 September 1935.
[24] Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, pp. 923–4.

found difficulties in coming to terms with the brave, new political world of the reformed electoral system. There were problems with identifying the new voters, their preferences and predilections; in selecting the right public personae for the parties and for transmitting their message to the different sectors of the population. The Corn Law crisis, for example, which began to infiltrate politics at the end of the decade, had to be delicately presented to a mixed urban and agricultural electorate.

The Whigs were faced with the new realities of politics after 1832.[25] The 1832 Reform Act had been a mixed blessing to the party. On the one hand, they could claim that they were the party of reform and enjoyed a political honeymoon in the balmy days of the early eighteen-thirties. In the West Riding constituencies, for example, all the candidates elected in the 1832 general election, had pinned their colours to the mast of reform. However, in reality, the Whigs were not a party which was wedded to a consistent and comprehensive revision of the constitution and thus they hovered uneasily between inactivity and outright condemnation of the reform schemes presented to them in the decade after 1832. The dilemma they faced, was summed up, using typical inflammatory language, by a Tory, William Busfeild Ferrand, MP for Knaresborough who wrote, 'the Whigs first obtained office by exciting the people into treason and rebellion and then transported them for the very advice and example which they themselves had given'.[26] The party, thus remained a reforming party but offered that reform within a cautious, conservative framework. The Whigs were very successful in borough as well as the county constituencies of the West Riding. Their cautious conservatism appealed to a large section of the electorate who were fearful of the

[25] For more on the transition from the Whig to the Liberal party, see D Southgate, *The Passing of the Whigs* (London, 1962) and P Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform.*

[26] Bradford Archives, Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/120. 4 June 1841, Tory campaign poster.

disorder and unrest that had accompanied the campaign for parliamentary reform. They managed to perform a tricky balancing act: not actively discouraging pressure for further reform; but not promoting it, either. Thus, Ellis Cunliffe Lister, MP for Bradford, in his address to electors in the 1837 general election, stated:

> I do not recommend you press for universal suffrage; get household suffrage first, and then try what you can get afterwards. You have a right to petition for it, and I will advise you to petition for it again and again, and don't cease because you are not answered at once. Be like the women with the unjust judge: go on petitioning, and I can assure you I will cheerfully present them...[27]

This could be roughly translated as I do not approve of further reform myself, but you, the electorate are welcome to petition for what you want, and I will present the petitions knowing that they will have little impact upon the Whig government. In summary, the Whigs of the West Riding became masters of inaction, neither encouraging nor discouraging the burgeoning political reform movements.

On occasions, however, the Whig candidates proved to hold views too conservative for direct presentation to the electorate. Their opinions had to be sanitised and their words creatively interpreted, for broadcasting to the voting public. Lister, for example, kept his periods of campaigning brief and said very little in public; speaking mostly to invited audiences of like-minded friends. In 1832, he did not appear at the hustings at all because of a judicious illness and in 1835 issued his first address in public less than a week before polling day. There is also a fascinating account of electoral management in the papers of William Aldam, the Whig member for Leeds in 1841. Aldam held unpopular views on the repeal of the corn laws and the secret ballot. He prepared a summary of his views in note form for publication and broadcast to the Leeds' electorate. However, his

[27] *Bradford Observer*, 6 June 1837. The reference to the women and the unjust judge comes from the New Testament; when a woman's persistent petitioning of a judge was eventually successful.

words were doctored for public consumption by his agent in Leeds, John Hubbard, who then printed a handbill, containing Aldam's supposed political beliefs. In the following extract, Aldam's original notes are in normal type with the published address in italics:

> I approve of the ministerial measure of commercial reform as a whole. I prefer the principle of a low fixed duty on corn...
>
> *It is my firm conviction that a complete change in our Commercial policy must take place and that the first step towards such a change should be to admit corn at a moderate fixed duty as proposed by her Majesty's ministers; but I look forward to the free importation, at an early period, of every necessity of life...*
>
> As for the Ballot... there are great, very great evils in the present system of open voting, but I fear those of secret voting would be still greater — every man should be responsible to public opinion for his conduct — I should fear to remove the control of public opinion from the only public act which most are ever called upon to perform — publicity is all important in public matters — I fear the ballot would strongly tend to demoralise the country...
>
> *As to the Ballot, my opinion has hitherto been in favour of open voting; but my experience in elections is too limited to enable me to form a very decided opinion; and I feel the clearly expressed sense of the Liberal party on the subject entitled to my most grave consideration... if it should appear to me that there is no other practical mode of protecting the voter than by the Ballot, I should feel it my duty to support it...*[28]

There were times when this careful façade, constructed by the Whigs themselves and their party managers, began to founder. This was often in constituencies where, because of the power of electoral patrons, it was assumed that the views of the electorate and the population at large, would not be crucial, in the final result. The lord of the manor at Huddersfield, who possessed considerable political influence, greeted the passage of the Reform Act thus:

> Mr. Ramsden congratulated himself that representation had been extended to what he termed 'the rich and opulent bodies who are capable of making a good choice' but at the same time he told his hearers that 'the working classes were

[28] Aldam MSS, uncatalogued notes dated 10 May 1841 and campaign poster dated 28 May 1841.

> not excluded from the representation... they had only to work away and get a ten pound house and they would have a vote'...[29]

This lack of empathy for the conditions of the working classes in the industrial towns of the West Riding, appears almost to be a Whig electioneering tactic. The rights of the manufacturers and merchants were emphasised and the legitimate claims of the unenfranchised were belittled. John Blackburne, MP for Huddersfield and Ramsden's nominee, saw no need to sympathise with the workers in the town which was the cradle of the factory reform movement. He attacked the burgeoning trade union movement as 'the product of great mischief' and told the workers that 'they would show more sense if they kept their money in a box at home'.[30] Blackburne's remarks and his description of working men as 'bulls, tigers and serpents'[31] brought a furious response from the working population:

> If 'unions' are calculated to encourage the destruction of Life and Property? How is it that in this immediate neighbourhood, which is entirely 'unionised' no property is destroyed, no blood shed? Whilst in the Agricultural districts where there are no 'unions' property is destroyed and blood shed...[32]

In spite of this response and the fame and stature of Blackburne's opponent, the factory reformer, Michael Sadler, Blackburne won the election, achieving a majority of nearly one hundred votes. Supporting the popular cause was no guarantee of electoral success and indeed, in the West Riding usually proved the opposite.[33] *Laissez-faire* Liberalism was also popular in the West Riding. Macaulay, MP for Leeds, echoed Ramsden's sentiments in Huddersfield, when he explained that:

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[29] *Leeds Mercury*, 11 August 1832.

[30] *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 9 September 1935.

[31] Blackburne cited in R Brook, *The Story of Huddersfield* (London, 1968), p. 121.

[32] Tomlinson MSS, number 90. Election campaign poster.

[33] It was not only the Tory radicals who struggled to translate popular acclaim into parliamentary triumph. Liberal radicals such as George Hadfield in Bradford and Samuel Bailey in Sheffield also performed weakly in parliamentary elections. The Chartist candidates, who survived campaigns to go to the polls, barely managed to get off the mark.

> The best government cannot act directly and suddenly and violently on the comforts of the people; it cannot rain down provisions into their houses, it cannot give them bread and meat and wine; these things they can only obtain by their own honest industry; and to protect them in that honest industry and to secure to them its fruits is the end of all honest government...[34]

In a review of Robert Southey's book, *Sir Thomas More: Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*, Macaulay wrote glowingly of the social benefits provided by employers in the manufacturing districts such as the West Riding. People live longer, he wrote 'because they are better fed, better lodged, better clothed and better attended in sickness; and these improvements are owing to that increase of wealth which the manufacturing system has produced'.[35] The economy of government and retrenchment of public expenditure, was a common theme in Whig public addresses. This was much to the glee of the Tories who could point to increases in taxation and expenditure by the Crown. Thus, Edmund Beckett Dennison, the Tory candidate for the West Riding in 1841 wrote:

> ...their *retrenchment* has ended in the *increase* of expenditure from £48,000,000 to £50,000,000; their *economy* has metamorphosed a *surplus* of one million and a half, into a deficiency of two millions and a half, and their promised *prosperity* is to be found in an *unprecedented stagnation* of trade and commerce...[36]

The political language of the Whigs put the emphasis, as Dennison so accurately parodies, upon retrenchment, economy and prosperity. The reduction of excessive taxes, especially upon commercial activity, was seen as the primary activity of government. Their election addresses rarely, if ever, mentioned social reform to alleviate the distress of the working classes in the region.[37]

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[34] *Leeds Mercury*, 16 June 1832.

[35] *Edinburgh Review*, 100 (1830) p. 539.

[36] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/81. 31 May 1841, Tory campaign poster.

[37] The emphasis, as illustrated by Macaulay's statements was on self-improvement. The function of government was to increase wealth. Thus the Poor Law Amendment Act was presented as a measure of 'social reform' because it aimed to reduce the cost of caring for the poor, which, it was argued, fell upon the middle classes of the country;

Many of the statements of the Whig politicians of the West Riding still took as their motif, the notion of civil and religious liberty that had been so important for the origins of the party in the seventeenth century and which had been shaped by that stalwart of West Riding Whiggery, Rockingham, in the eighteenth century. Charles Wood, MP for Halifax and a central figure in Whig government circles, brought those ideas up-to-date in his election address of 1832, in which he explained his parliamentary track record as the past member for Grimsby and Wareham:

> Acting steadily on the principles which I profess I have voted for the extension of religious liberty to the Dissenters and Catholics. For the speedy extinction of Negro slavery. In favour of civil liberty both at home and abroad. The relaxation of monopolies. The extinction of the tithe system in Ireland. The freedom of the press. The relief of the productive industry of the country from undue taxation. The reduction in pensions and salaries. Good and cheap government. And lastly, for the extension of political rights amongst the Independent and Intelligent classes of the community...[38]

Apart from the Whigs, the remaining Liberal candidates of the West Riding boroughs could all be described as either secular or dissenting radicals.[39] They were termed radical for two reasons. Firstly, in comparison with the Whigs, these candidates were more concerned with reform, in all spheres, but particularly in the areas of religion, education and the constitution. Secondly, the majority of the candidates were ardent crusaders for particular, individual issues and campaigned tirelessly on these platforms. Hadfield, a candidate in the Bradford election of 1835, led the campaign of the dissenters for the disestablishment of the Church of England. Buckingham, the member for Sheffield spearheaded the crusade for the reform of the licensing laws and was a leading member of

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and therefore increase wealth. Even Hadfield, the radical candidate in the Bradford election declared that he was unwilling to oppose the act until it had been given a fair trial. Wright, 'Politics and Opinion in Bradford', volume 1, p. 127.

[38] *Huddersfield and Halifax Express*, 16 June 1832.

[39] For a discussion of these men and their contribution to the Liberal party see, Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party*, especially pp. 28–39.

the British Temperance movement. Samuel Bailey, a candidate for the same town, was a fervid follower of Bentham and the author of several works on the philosophy of utilitarianism.[40] These radicals, to whom the name of the celebrated reformer and economist, Joseph Hume, candidate for Leeds in 1841, could be added were often incomers, who had formed their reputations elsewhere. As such they were often distanced from the local radical groups and particularly from the working classes. In addition, the causes to which they put their names were predominantly those which concerned the middle classes and this was a further disparity, emphasising their lack of common concerns.

At times, the two groups formed two distinct and separate parties. In 1835, for example, Daniel Salt hosted a political dinner in Bradford aimed at bringing the two sides together.[41] As late as 1841 in Leeds, however, the Whigs and the radicals were still acting separately. A letter from the agent of William Aldam explained that the Liberals had decided:

> to separate themselves into two parties — Whig and Radical and I got a summons to attend the Whig camp that evening. I found a knot of Whigs in one room and a larger knot of Radicals in another, and each trying to settle whom their candidate should be...[42]

A characteristic of both the Whigs and the radicals in the eighteen-thirties was their repudiation of the views of the labouring classes. By the late eighteen-thirties, the comradeship of the reform agitation had faded into the mists of time. The Liberals had been encouraged to distance themselves from the working class during the factory reform campaign of the early years of the decade, which had driven the masses into the arms of Tories such as the Demosthenic Oastler and Sadler. Issues such as the

[40] Short biographies of the candidates are provided in Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, for more detailed references see Chapter V.

[41] Wright, 'Politics and Opinion', volume 1, p. 141.

[42] Aldam MSS, uncatalogued. 19 May 1841, Martin to William Aldam.

Poor law and economic distress drove the two camps further apart. The MPs' behaviour in parliament also dismayed popular opinion and promises on the ballot, church reform and increased educational provision failed to be delivered to the populations of the towns of the West Riding. Thus John Bell, the Chartist candidate for Sheffield in the 1837 election attacked the two sitting members:

> ...they may go to London and say they represent Sheffield; the bricks and mortar and maybe the money of the town they may represent; but not the honour, the intelligence and the ingenuity of the place, as exhibited by the working class...[43]

The estrangement between the liberals and the working classes received a further setback with the popularity of Chartism in the region. The *Bradford Observer* summarised the problems faced by those sympathetic to the Chartist cause:

> ...the middle classes have a delicate game to play at Present. The middle classes are a peace loving class: they hate all riots and rioters; and are ready, as we have seen to unite with the aristocracy to put down the disturbances...[44]

The lack of support for the Chartists from the Liberal, middle class establishment illustrated the deep hostility between the two classes that had riven them since the passage of the Reform Act. The Anti-Corn Law campaign, which could unite the urban middle class free traders and the poverty-stricken workers who feared for the price of bread, came too late to bridge the ever-widening gap between the two groups.[45]

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[43] Cited in J L Baxter, 'Origins of Social Class War: A History of the Economic, Political and Cultural Struggles of Working People in South Yorkshire, 1750–1850', 2 volumes, PhD, University of Sheffield, 1977, volume 2, p. 359.

[44] *Bradford Observer*, 18 August 1842.

[45] The Liberals emphasised the common ground between the workers and the middle classes in the election campaign posters which focused on the Corn Laws. A typical poster from Bradford stated: 'So the Americans say, "send us your worsted goods and we shall send you our corn", but we say, "No. We will prohibit your corn by high duties". And therefore they now say, "then we will prohibit your goods by a high duty also". Electors of Bradford! Which of the plans is for the benefit of the town. If the stoppage of our trade with America, then vote for Hardy. If a free trade in both corn and goods, then vote for Busfeild and Lister.' Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/68. 1837, Liberal campaign poster.

For the Conservatives of the West Riding, 1832 appeared to signify disaster for the party. A leading Tory, Colonel J P Tempest of Tong Hall, near Leeds summarised the position in a circular letter sent to members of the gentry and aristocracy of the West Riding in 1832:

> A few Tories had a conversation at York assizes on the chances of returning one member for the West Riding, when it was decided upon to consult the leading families and influential gentlemen and to ascertain their opinions. Whether it would be best to let the next election pass quickly over without making attempt or to make an exception even though there should not be any great prospect of success, with the view of keeping the party together and preparing the way for a more fortunate result on a future occasion... We agreed that in case it should be thought right to make any attempt, some sort of meeting of our friends should take place to consult about the right person to be brought forward... that we might fix upon someone who would reunite our scattered bonds. This may be rather a difficult task, as from what I have heard there are some questions (free trade for instance) to which some Tories will never consent...[46]

The despair articulated by the Tories proved to be well-founded. In the 1832 general election no Tories were returned for the West Riding and the party eventually decided not to contest the county seat. The solid menu of church and king Toryism which had served the party well in the eighteenth century was not acceptable in the constituencies of the West Riding facing the social realities of industrialisation. The recovery of the party, which was almost immediate[47] was due to a particular brand of Tory radical paternalism that had as its birthplace the squalid warehouses and smoky chimneys of Huddersfield. It started as a single-issue crusade — that of factory reform — and in this respect was similar to the campaigns of the secular and dissenting radicals of the Liberal party. The philosophy behind the campaign embraced all areas of social reform, not just that of

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[46] Bradford Archives, Spencer Stanhope MSS, Spst 11/5/3/49. 10 September 1832, circular letter from J P Tempest, Tong Hall, Leeds. Tempest shows remarkable prescience in predicting the very issue — repeal of the corn laws — which would split the party fourteen years later.

[47] The Tories had some success in all the constituencies of the West Riding except Sheffield and Huddersfield before 1841.

improving the conditions in the factories of the northern industrial towns. Its practitioners harked back romantically to a fictitious, paternalistic, philanthropic squirearchy of rural England and wished to re-create the spirit, if not the embodiment of those ideas, in an urban setting.[48] The Tories, unlike their Liberal counterparts, had no qualms or ambivalence about direct appeals to the working-class and accentuated their concerns with the conditions of the people. As one commentator remarked, 'Sadler is a Tory, Oastler is a Tory, Perring is a Tory, and Foster is a radical, but noble minded men they lay aside their differences to maintain the cause of the poor'.[49] The Reverend G S Bull of Byerley near Bradford, a leading light in the factory movement, also laid emphasis on the importance of helping the poor, 'the borough... should return representatives who will make it their *first* concern to take care *for the Poor*, for the Rich can take care of themselves'.[50]

It has been claimed that this brand of Tory radicalism was popular with the masses but less so with either the mainstream party or the electorate.[51] To some extent this is an accurate reflection of the *national* picture[52]; but it under-estimates the centrality of the social reform movement in the West Riding *region*. Without this life-line, which once again popularised Conservatism and brought it into contact with

[48] Recently, some have gone further and argued that this paternalism was crucial to and a conscious tactic of the establishment of an urban, capitalist elite. See, for example, D Roberts, *Paternalism in Victorian England* (London, 1979), P Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (Brighton, 1980) and Moore, *The Politics of Deference.*

[49] C Richardson, *An Address to the Working-class of Leeds and the West Riding*, (Leeds, 1832). Perring was editor of the *Leeds Intelligencer* and Foster the editor of the *Leeds Patriot*. This extract also demonstrates the influence of editors of the local press. For further discussion, see pp. 61–4.

[50] Bradford Archives, DB 13, case 65. G S Bull, *To the Candidates of the Borough of Bradford* (Bradford, 1832).

[51] Fraser, 'The Fruits of Reform', pp. 95–6 and J A Jowitt, 'Charles Wood, (1800–1885): A Case Study in the Formation of Liberalism in Mid-Victorian England', (unpublished MPhil, University of Leeds, 1980), p. 38.

[52] B Coleman, *Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1988), pp. 125–130.

contemporary concerns; it is difficult to see how the party could have extricated itself from the mire of political obscurity after the tremendous sense of exaltation which followed the passing of the Reform Act. The Conservative leadership in parliament may have distanced itself from the vituperative language and impassioned behaviour of the Tory Radicals but the party, as a whole, were not adverse to exploiting the discomfort of the Liberal party. An attack by William Busfeild, MP for Knaresborough on the 'tommy shop' system, which compelled workers to buy from employers' shops where the prices could be higher, brought him instant notoriety:

> ...his unqualified denunciations of all the manufacturers of the country seduced the more unguarded gentlemen of the agricultural interest into vehement cheers... for three days the lately obscure member for Knaresborough was a parliamentary lion with a mane and a tail of the first magnitude...[53]

On their part, these ultra Tories were prepared even publicly to shun the Conservative party in London, in order to cement their alliance with the people. Oastler, for example, wrote in 1837:

> I have long since sworn to sacrifice caste and party and to unite hand and heart, with any and with every man who will assist me in establishing the Christian rights of labour in this wilderness of Mammon....[54]

It is clear that although the leadership were uncomfortable with the linkage of the name of the Conservative party with some of the radical activity in Yorkshire, it was equally important, on occasions for Oastler and the Tory radicals to distance themselves from the mainstream political establishment. In the end, both groups used the populist or respectable characteristics of the other when necessary for electoral advancement. The link between these Tory radicals and the Young England movement of Manners, Bentinck and Disraeli at the end of the decade gave the social reformers heightened credibility in the party. It was essential, for the

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[53] *Illustrated London News*, 25 June 1825.

[54] R Oastler, *The Right of the Poor to Liberty and Life* (London, 1838).

success of the campaign that the rural Tory parsons and squires could link up with elites from the urban, textile districts. This brand of Tory paternalism remained a constant ideological thread throughout the nineteenth-century.[55] The relative electoral success of the Conservative party in the region has already been alluded to. It is clear, moreover, that far from being seen as an electoral liability, 'conventional' Conservatives such as the Stuart Wortleys and Richard Monckton Milnes, were adding the message of the Tory radicals to their election addresses. Milnes, the member for Pontefract, added to the end of a rather pedestrian statement to the electors, concerned largely with 'constitutional order', his support for 'the Cause of the Queen, the Constitution and the Poor'.[56] Hardy, the Conservative MP for Bradford was also quick to associate himself with the campaigns of the social reformers, in a tirade against the Poor Law:

> I need scarcely add that I am resolutely opposed to the principles and provisions of the New Poor Law Act, and that I will never cease from my exertions till it has been blotted from the state book and poverty shall no longer be treated as a Crime. I feel convinced that the principles which I confess are those which actuate a great majority of the Constituency of Bradford, and that they will hail with delight a return to those sound and constitutional principles which have roused this country to so proud an eminence amongst the nations of the world. I have studied to promote the life and the interest of my poorer fellow countrymen and shall ever anxiously and strenuously support all measures which are conducive to their welfare...[57]

There were traditional Conservative appeals to patriotism, to political stability, to the rights of the 'Protestant' church, the Crown and the constitution; but these were always shrouded in the language of social responsibility to the poor. William Wilberforce junior, who stood as a candidate in a by-election at Bradford in 1841 graphically summed up the sentiments of West Riding Conservatism in an address to the electors:

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[55] R Blake, *Disraeli* (London, 1966) and P Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform* (London, 1967).

[56] Trinity College, University of Cambridge, Houghton MSS, E1/4. 18 July 1837, Tory election poster.

[57] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/12. 22 June 1837, Tory campaign poster.

> I at once decidedly say I am a Conservative. As such I am opposed to sweeping, wild, organic changes in the constitution of our blessed country... I like old ties, local affections and old institutions. I am against every measure which will break this grand union which unites all ranks of society, from the lowest to the highest, which secures to the peasant immunity from oppression, and at the same time vests in safety, the crown upon the head of the queen. The principle is the same; there is nothing which in justice and equity can preserve the vested rights of the one, to which the other may not appeal to vindicate his birthright and by which to lay his claim to the inalienable rights of an Englishman...[58]

The Tories of the region, reaped the rewards of this judicious concern for the poor and achieved a modicum of success in almost all of the constituencies of the West Riding. Ironically, and to Oastler's chagrin, they were never successful in Huddersfield, the town that had been the birthplace of the factory reform movement.

Toryism in the region was of a particular West Riding brand that it was difficult to imitate elsewhere in the country. Liberalism too echoed the local concerns of the industrial magnates, the dissenters and the urban elites pressing for municipal independence. However, this understandable, local emphasis, did not reflect the fact that the electorates of the region were unconcerned with national and international politics. The problems of Ireland, concerns about trade with America, the evils of the East India company's monopoly and relations with Europe were important preoccupations with the electorate, as this exchange between Lister and a Bradford voter illustrates:

> Mr Lister: If I have given a single vote contrary to my professions to you, I am here ready to answer to you for having done so.
>
> Mr Jackson: Yes, I think there is one, Sir
>
> Mr Lister: What is that?
>
> Mr Jackson: Your vote on the Canada question.

[58] Bradford Archives, DB13 case 13, speech of William Wilberforce at Bradford, 1841.

> Mr Lister: I assure you and confess to you, that I did give that vote almost entirely against my conscience. It was a wrong vote and I acknowledge it.[59]

These concerns with international affairs often reflected the crucial importance of the international trade to the merchants and manufacturers of the region. Party politics could not to be said to be wholly involved with local issues in the nascent constituencies of the West Riding.[60] The ideal for the local electorate was for their member of parliament to be a local man, of national standing who was knowledgeable on and active in international affairs. Although this level of perfection was rarely reached in the West Riding, the member for Halifax, Charles Wood, could be described as such a candidate. He was a member of a local landowning family, a close relation of Earl Grey and a member of a succession of Whig cabinets from the 1830s until the 1860s.[61] It was no longer acceptable to be merely a king-pin of local affairs. What use was Titus Salt to Bradford as a member of parliament? Although a famous local philanthropist because of his role in establishing the model village of Saltaire; during his period as MP for Bradford from 1859 until he accepted the Chiltern Hundreds in 1861, Salt never spoke a word in parliament.[62] Party politics in the region reflected the trend towards the professionalisation of politics whilst retaining a distinct local, Yorkshire flavour.[63]

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[59] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/50. 1837, Tory campaign poster.

[60] Nossiter, 'Voting Behaviour, 1832–1872', pp. 386–89.

[61] For the career of Sir Charles Wood see Jowitt, 'Charles Wood'.

[62] J Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist, Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth Century Bradford* (London, 1983).

[63] The emphasis on the predominance of local rather than national politics should not be exaggerated. Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 240–69 and Vincent, *Poll Books*, pp. 46–7 argue that local and personal interests were preferred to party discipline or strong government. The West Riding, however, follows national trends (a swing towards the Conservatives throughout the 1830s, for example) and its electorate expected their politicians to be concerned with national and international affairs in addition to the natural stress on nurturing local interests.

The Process and procedures of electoral politics

There was no great transformation in the operation of electoral politics after 1832. The Reform Act was concerned with the personnel of those taking part in elections rather than voting practices. The single change that was introduced in the field of electoral procedures was however, a major one — the introduction of voter registration.[64] Accurate canvass lists could now be drawn up and the practice of candidates and their agents producing manuscript copy-books with lists of potential voters and their pledges was superseded by the use of the printed registers of voters issued annually and available from local officials, which was then annotated by hand.[65] The cost to candidates of the new system was greatly reduced. For example, Michael Mitton, agent to Richard Monckton Milnes, MP for Pontefract charged around one hundred and fifty guineas for the production of the copy book and the task of undertaking the canvass of Pontefract; William Jacomb, solicitor and agent for John Stuart Wortley, candidate for the West Riding charged only 120*l* 15*s* for the canvass and 7*l* 7*s* for the list of voters for a constituency at least fifteen times larger.[66] Registration provided an impetus for the establishment of party organisation. The maintenance of correct lists of voters was now a crucial part of election campaigning as this handbook for the Conservative Society of the West Riding spells out:

> West Riding registration — general directions:
>
> 1) The placing on the register of supporters to the cause;

[64] See Chapter III for the effect of registration on voting behaviour.

[65] Examples of the two methods are: Houghton MSS, E1/1, the copy book of Michael Mitton, agent for Richard Monckton Milnes in Pontefract. The book contains a list of voters, their qualification for voting, their address, their pledges and their actual votes in contests from 1832–1837. Wakefield Archives, Registers with notes by J L Fernandes, agent to William Sebright Lascelles, which is a copy of the Wakefield register for 1836 with notes by Fernandes of pledges and promises.

[66] Houghton MSS, E2/9, 1841, Michael Mitton senior to R P Milnes and Tomlinson MSS, number 80, 1835, expenses of J S Wortley's election.

2) Objecting to opponents who have bad or doubtful claims;

3) Defending claims of friendly voters to whom objections have been made...[67]

The fact that the revising barristers' courts sat annually encouraged these early party organisations to sustain their activities between election contests and thus registration was instrumental in the establishment of permanent party associations.

Registration brought a new phase into election campaigns. The two main political parties quickly realised the importance of managing this stage effectively. The victory of the Tories in Leeds in 1835 has, for instance, been attributed to the clever supervision of the registration process and the Liberal stranglehold on Sheffield was cemented by that party's out-manoeuvring of the Conservatives at the revising barrister's court.[68] It was quickly discovered that the objectivity of the revising barristers' courts could be hi-jacked by the careful adoption of the local men who were appointed overseers for the purpose. Thus the Conservative handbook on registration procedures added this note: 'when the period for choosing overseers returns, it must be borne in mind that it is of consequence to have overseers who are favourably disposed'.[69] The overseers then, were not necessarily impartial figures and a number of duplicitous practices were engaged upon, to influence their judgement; to arrange, in circumstances where the opposition was non-existent or taken unawares, for the inclusion of a large number of friendly, if unqualified voters to be added to the register; and even, to render the opposition incapable of undertaking their duties:

[67] Tomlinson MSS, number 110, West Riding Registration.

[68] Fraser, 'The Fruits of Reform', pp. 98–100 and Chapter V.

[69] Tomlinson MSS, number 110, West Riding Registration.

A Whig trick

> On Thursday 25th ult. the last day on which objections could be served according to the Reform Bill on persons claiming to vote for the West Riding, William Mallinson of Hopton was employed by the Conservative party to serve several notices of objection on various Whiglings at Hopton and Mirfield etc. He called upon Mr John Stancliffe, the overseer to give him duplicate notices. He, not wanting his brother James to be taken off the list of voters, took a tailor called Benjamin Pearson with him and got Mallinson drunk so he could not serve the notices...[70]

The importance of capable and energetic party organisations was recognised throughout the West Riding. Anne Lister, a prominent Tory from Halifax, wrote about organisation in the county constituency as early as 1823:

> I wished for another contested election and that we might be able to bring in two Ministerial members. Mr Wortley we all observed was likely to have a seat in the Peers. Whom should we get in his place? Lord Harewood had not a son fit for it. We did not know whom to mention; but so far from two Blue members, Mr Waterhouse feared we should not have one. I maintained Mr Lascelles had lost his contested election through want of better management... the other party always outwitted us; we were always too late or too supine...[71]

When she became involved in borough politics in Halifax after 1832, her plan was for the Conservative association to undertake the task of the creation of new voters as well as the management of the existing electorate and that the committee should take an active role in this regard rather than leaving it to individuals, who in her opinion were often found lacking.[72] There were all too few individuals, like Anne Lister, who were prepared to devote resources and attention to the issue of management and organisation and the party associations in the West Riding remained sporadic and reactive alliances of local bigwigs.[73] They were usually

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[70] *Leeds Intelligencer*, 3 September 1836; Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 118.

[71] Calderdale Archives, Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/6, Anne Lister's diaries, 18 July 1823.

[72] There a number of references in Anne Lister's diaries to her desire for the better management of Conservative affairs, for example, 'then sat talking politics. H[ainsworth] all for my association system — he himself can influence 20 votes...'. *Ibid.*, 11 August 1837.

[73] For more detail of Anne Lister's contribution see Chapter IV.

short-lived and were in operation only during election campaigns. There were no national, *official* party associations and thus rival candidates ostensibly supporting the same party platform could have their own individual organisations that would not co-operate with those of the other candidates.[74] This was the case in Sheffield in 1832 when all four candidates stood on a Liberal-reforming ticket, but all arranged their campaigns separately with little collaboration. Organisational coups were few and far between and election campaigns were often muddled-through in a thoroughly amateur fashion, with local officials reacting to events rather than controlling the momentum of a contest.

Often the best organised people during election campaigns appeared to be the unenfranchised — those men who did not qualify for the franchise and the women, who had been officially excluded from the franchise by the 1832 Act. The campaign to elect Richard Oastler as a member for Huddersfield in 1837 provides the clearest example of the intervention of the non-electors. There was a great influx into the town of mill workers from Lancashire and Cheshire, as well as Yorkshire during the contest for the borough and that of the county constituency of the West Riding. These Oastlerites were implicated in the election riot at Wakefield which occurred during the nomination of candidates for the West Riding in 1837. Whether or not that was the case, they must have provided a menacing show of strength when a procession of around twenty thousand marched into the town from Huddersfield with Oastler at their head.[75]

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[74] For the development of national party organisation see H J Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli* (London, 1959); although John Vincent argues that the development in party organisation on a national scale did not mean electorates were more organised: 'the organised leviathan of 1880 might have less grip than the pothouse committee of 1832', Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party*, p. 82.

[75] *Halifax Guardian*, 1 August 1837. This was at a time when the population of Huddersfield was only nineteen thousand and so the involvement of outsiders must have played a substantial role in the proceedings.

Oastler was thus able to match the power of the Ramsden family's wealth and influence with his own, equally impressive weight of popular support. In addition to displaying this show of muscle, the non-electors undertook their own independent canvasses of the Huddersfield voters and engaged in a campaign of exclusive dealing on Oastler's behalf:

> The Oastlerites in their endeavours to get their pet into Parliament have tried various means, and among others, they have employed a number of women from Paddock to deliver a printed address from the non-electors of Paddock to the shopkeepers in Huddersfield threatening the withdrawal of their custom and that of their neighbours, if they do not vote for their favourite...[76]

This message, which was delivered by the women because it was they who were customarily in charge of the family budget, contained a reminder to the shopkeepers of the vast economic power the non-electors had at their disposal:

> Dear Sir
>
> We have been informed that you intend voting against the wish of the labouring class, as well as the men of wealth. Now, Sir, we have to inform you that if you do not vote against the Whigs at this time we will mark your shop. We have associations formed in all the surrounding villages to such a degree that we can ruin your business. Perhaps you are relying for assistance from those 400 printed names [the electors] — if so you will soon find out the delusions. What are 400 names to support nearely [sic] 200 shopkeepers? What are in fact 400 names in comparison to 20,000 people and upward who are waiting with longing anxiety for Mr Oastler's return to Parliament? If by your vote you blast the ardent wishes of the people can you expect them to trade at your shop? We are sure you cannot — then be wise in time lest you should repent when it is too late. If you wish the people to support you in your trade — support them by your vote — or else do not vote at all.
>
> FROM THE PEOPLE[77]

Oastler, himself the master of vituperative and inflammatory language backed up the campaign of the non-electors after he was defeated in the contest. He printed a poster, naming the three hundred and twenty

[76] *Bradford Observer*, 27 July 1837.
[77] *Ibid.*

two electors who had cast their vote against him in the election, appealing to the unenfranchised men and women of Huddersfield:

> will you be downtrodden by those 322 Bastille Despots? Then prie! Prie!! And let those wretches eat the little flesh you have off your bones and sell them to make sizing to size their warps with. If you will not trade with your friends alone, the despicable squad will drink the sweat from your labour till they are bloated; they will ride you till you fall, break your knees and wind; then will they cast you into the bastilles, to be pried to death, and your bodies torn in piecemeal by the dissectors — the high road to the Bastille and low wages is through the shop door of a STANSFIELD VOTER!![78]

Oastler managed cunningly to associate the privations of the New Poor Law with the act of patronising the establishments of the shopkeepers who had supported his Whig opponent. His savage imagery ensured that the issues that he had campaigned for during the election would not be forgotten. The Tories, especially, viewed the non-electors as a rich, potential source they could mine to counter-act the Whigs' popularity achieved by piloting the Reform bill through parliament. An election poster of 1831, before the passage of the Act, sought to remind the working class that they, who had agitated with indefatigable zeal for the measure, would not benefit from it:

> Operatives! Producers of all wealth! Industrious Bees! Be assured that the majority of that selfish few who now possess the franchise <u>will not act for</u> you...
>
> Working Bees!... follow <u>no leaders</u> but those who advocate <u>equal rights and equal justice to all</u>. Enrol yourselves more closely in <u>union</u>. Spare a little of your pittance, <u>small</u> as unhappily it is, to form a <u>Fund</u> with which to <u>fight</u> your enemies...[79]

The non-electors themselves, rapidly acknowledged the fact that the Reform Act had effectively banished them to the side-lines of parliamentary politics. The formation of the Chartist movement was one indication of this. In Bradford in 1837 there was a public meeting of the

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[78] Tomlinson MSS, uncatalogued.

[79] *Ibid.*, number 72. 2 May 1831, Tory campaign poster, Dewsbury.

non-electors of Bradford 'to take into consideration the propriety of protesting against the present unjust and tyrannical law, which prohibits the labouring classes from voting in the election of members of parliament and consequently prevents their interests being duly attended to by the Legislature of the kingdom...'.[80] Anne Lister was particularly in admiration of the non-electors of Dewsbury:

> The Dewsbury people who are the most spirited in the Riding... showed a unanimity, courage and perseverance worthy of an enlightened and free people — held a meeting in the town to determine what they should do with their votes — the electors agreeing to vote as the majority of the inhabitants required them...[81]

In the event, the altruism of the Dewsbury voters was not put to the test. Dewsbury was not permitted to return its own members to parliament and there was no contest for the West Riding in 1832. Although those who did not qualify for the vote could not participate in the electoral process directly, this did not mean that they were unable to influence proceedings to a great degree. One of the most effective ways in which they were involved was in the show of hands which occurred after the nomination of the candidates and before any poll. The *Leeds Mercury* was particularly contemptuous of the Ripon Conservative candidates in an uncontested election of 1837:

> there being no opposition the Tories had it all their own way; yet they could not, with all their power and influence, muster a decent show of hands, only ten or twelve being held up for Mr P[emberton] and six for the learned knight...[82]

Although, the 'show of hands' was merely a symbolic gesture and little more than a traditional custom, it was considered essential for candidates to perform well at this stage of a contest. The fact that in an uncontested election, the candidates could not muster more than a dozen

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[80] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/1/81, 10 July 1837, poster advertising a public meeting of the non-electors of Bradford.

[81] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/6, Anne Lister's diaries, 21 December 1832.

[82] *Leeds Mercury*, 29 July 1837.

supporters graphically illustrated the discontent and disillusionment experienced by the Ripon public with their treatment by Miss Lawrence of Studley Royal, the borough proprietor. For the non-electors, the second crucial event during the nomination proceedings was when the candidates took to the hustings to be questioned by the crowd. A custom of allowing a representative of the non-electors to question the candidates was established in the new constituencies of the West Riding. These interrogators — men such as Peter Bussey in Bradford, Isaac Ironside in Sheffield, Joshua Hobson in Huddersfield and Joseph Lees of Leeds — had often cut their political teeth leading the local Political Unions of the early eighteen-thirties and acted as a conduit for the opinions of the mass of non-electors:

> Mr Peter Bussey then came forward and was received with loud cheering. [He said] 'I have not another gentleman to propose as a candidate but I hold in my hand the heartfelt conviction of 10,000 hard working men which contains an enumeration of certain grievances of which the non-represented have to complain and it sets forth certain rights which the non-electors ought to enjoy...'[83]

The fact that the labouring classes had formulated a long list of questions for the candidates and had appointed someone to present them shows a remarkable degree of organisation. These inquisitors usually sought to extract pledges from the candidates regarding their future behaviour in parliament and it took skilled negotiators such as Macaulay to withstand the temptation of giving promises that they could not keep:

> I wish to add a few words touching a question which has lately been much canvassed, — I mean the question of pledges. In this letter, and in every letter which I have written to my friends at Leeds, I have plainly declared my *opinions*. But I think it, at this juncture, my duty to declare that I will give no *pledges*. I will not bind myself to make or to support any particular motion. I will state as shortly as I can, some of the reasons which have induced me to form this determination. The great beauty of the representative system is that it unites the advantages arising from a division of labour. Just as a physician understands medicine better than an ordinary man, — just as a shoemaker makes shoes better than an ordinary man, — a person whose life is passed in

[83] *Bradford Observer*, 27 July 1837.

> transacting affairs of State, becomes a better statesman than an ordinary man. In politics, as in every other department of life, the public ought to have the means of checking those who serve it. If a man finds that he derives no benefit from the prescriptions of his physician, he calls in another. If his shoes do not fit him he changes his shoemaker. If his representatives misgovern him, he can discard them at the next election. But when he has called in a physician of whom he hears had a good report, and whose general practice he believes to be judicious, it would be absurd in him to tie down that physician to order particular pills and particular draughts. While he continues to be a customer of a shoemaker it would be absurd in him to sit by and direct every motion of that shoemaker's hand. And in the same manner it would, I think, be absurd in him to require positive pledges and exact daily and hourly obedience from his representative. My opinion is that electors ought at first to choose cautiously, — then to confide liberally, — and, when the term for which they have selected their member has expired, to review his conduct equitably and to pronounce on the whole taken together...[84]

Macaulay, as the experienced and consummate politician managed to extricate himself carefully from the necessity of giving pledges, propitiously ignoring the fact that the men to whom he wrote had *no* hand in electing their representative and so were unable to remove him if his conduct was unsatisfactory. All they could do was to recommend candidates to the electors, whose programmes were similar to their own. The official questioners of the labouring classes stated the popular causes of the time — universal suffrage, the abolition of the corn laws, the dismantling of the poor law, the equalisation of the rights of all religious denominations and the removal of tithes and state pensions.[85]

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[84] *Leeds Mercury*, 18 August 1832. Text of a letter from Thomas Babington Macaulay to Joseph Lees.

[85] A typical list of questions formulated by the Leeds Political Union in 1832 contained the following: '1) Will you... advocate such an alteration in the Corn Laws as will enable the consumer to have cheaper bread; 2) Will you advocate a strict economy in every department of state; 3) Will you advocate the abolition of tithes...; 4) Will you advocate an equalisation to a great extent of the Church establishment; 5) Will you advocate the abolition of all taxes on knowledge; 6) Will you advocate the abolition of slavery in every part of the globe; 7) Will you advocate the destruction of all monopolies, particularly the close borough corporations... also the East India Company and the Bank of England monopolies; 8) Will you advocate the establishment of a National Bank; 9) Will you advocate just and cheap law...; 10) Will you advocate a tax upon all real and funded property...; 11) Will you advocate triennial parliaments and votes by ballot' *Leeds Mercury*, 4 August 1832.

Not all candidates were as skilful as Macaulay in facing the crowds and answering questions off-the-cuff. The political neophyte, William Aldam who stood as a candidate for Leeds in the 1841 contest, was rigorously coached by his agent, William Martin:

> Pure speech is often the best at elections and as you will have to canvass the voters by addressing them in public meetings of all the wards, I think you should be prepared. And moreover, as at elections the public think that they have a right to browbeat, swagger and ask all manner of questions, will you so prepare your mind as to be determined to take a minute at least before answering any such question whatever which may be put. In addition to these matters mentioned in your political creed you will, I have no doubt be asked to state publicly:
>
> 1. Will you vote for the abolition of church rates.
>
> 2. Will you promote any enquiry for cutting off useless pensions and reducing national expenditure
>
> 3. Will you consider the reduction of taxation and in what way will you promote it.
>
> 4. Will you promote national education.
>
> 5. Will you object to an extension of the suffrage.
>
> 6. Are you for shortening the duration of parliaments.
>
> These are the main popular points, but always bear in mind that you are the man of the Whigs and that the political creed you have sent is, with exception of the Ballot, as far as we are for. But your accordance without objection to those points I have written will add to your popularity and more than decide your election.
>
> I will give you for your guidance my notion on the above points, as to what I think our party thinks about them:
>
> 1. As church rates are by Law and a cause of much bitterness, that the remedy is a Law for their abolition — this you might safely say you could vote for.
>
> 2. I have not heard much about pensions, but it would be safe to say that you would try to abolish all forms which did not merit the national honour.
>
> 3. This tends to a Property Tax. I should answer this difficult question by saying that I consider all taxes obnoxious and that therefore I should not substitute one tax for another, till I had fully tried those fiscal reforms which if the calculators' purposes were true would not only supersede the necessity of new taxes, but would reduce those already in existence.
>
> 4. Yes.
>
> 5. Yes till the national education of the people was established, then I would consider its extension permanent.

6. Yes.[86]

The meticulous nature of Martin's grilling of Aldam demonstrates the importance that was attached to a good performance on the hustings in closely, contested boroughs such as Leeds. The role of unenfranchised public opinion was taken very seriously and a failure to perform at the hustings was tantamount to vote of no confidence in a candidate and could be a severe psychological set-back. The unrepresented masses may have been excluded from the franchise but they were active, central participants that could not easily be overlooked.

The election days themselves were full of the ritual and ceremony described by O'Gorman in his studies of the eighteenth century electorate.[87] People poured into the towns and cities which were staging the elections to partake in the spectacle and to drink in the atmosphere of the contests. For example in Leeds in 1837, '[there was] an assemblage of 40,000 persons — the two sections distinguishable by the antagonistic colours of their favourites — forming two separate and contending masses, and each (though in a different degree) animated by a determination to assert and to defend their political rights'.[88] The crowds at Bradford, Sheffield, Leeds, Huddersfield and Halifax could be numbered in thousands, rather than hundreds and it was the custom, because elections took place on several days to tour the neighbourhood, participating in the contests of nearby boroughs: 'Captain Fenton says on Sunday evening last many thousands came from Halifax and other places to Huddersfield to preach in the open air'.[89] The candidates processed to the hustings in a great parade, led by flag bearers and bands playing the

[86] Aldam MSS, uncatalogued. 19 May 1841, William Martin to William Aldam.

[87] O'Gorman, *Voters, Parties and Patrons*, pp. 138–141 and 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780–1860', *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), pp. 79–115.

[88] *Leeds Mercury*, 29 July 1837.

[89] Wentworth Woodhouse MSS, G9/4. 11 August 1832, J C Ramsden to Lord Milton.

raucous election songs of the time. A bystander at the Bradford election of 1837 describes the scene:

> It was proposed that a procession should be formed to go to the Mansion house to escort the Liberal candidates to the borough.... in the course of half-an-hour a procession, the like of which has never been seen in Bradford before departed on that errand, accompanied with four bands of music and a variety of banners. There were about 150 horsemen who formed the vanguard; these were followed by a numerous body of electors on foot, three abreast, then a multitude of non-electors; after them several carriages, gigs and phaetons laden inside and out with human beings...[90]

To demonstrate particular public approval, the horses pulling the carriages of the candidates were sometimes dispensed with and the vehicles were pulled to the hustings by manpower alone.[91] These public displays of support were accompanied by much symbolism and imagery. For example, at the West Riding election of 1837 the Whig candidates rode side by side to the hustings: 'mounted on black chargers, habited as Knights, and preceded by an Orange flag inscribed "Justice for Ireland!"'.[92] There were also the colours of course, which were pivotal in demonstrating the allegiances of candidates. For example, John Hardy, the member for Bradford was viciously lampooned for his numerous changes of party after 1832:

> Caution
>
> In 1832 Mr Hardy's colour was orange. In 1835 Mr Hardy's colour was white. In 1837 Mr Hardy mingled his white with young Busfeild's blue; — Mr Hardy now assumes his late colleague's colour without his honesty.

[90] *Bradford Observer*, 27 July 1837.

[91] In William Busfeild's description of his victory at Knaresborough, he is particularly pleased by this gesture from the public because at the previous contest he had not even been able to deliver his election address. Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/123. 10 June 1841, Glorious Triumph of Conservative Principles at Knaresborough.

[92] *West Riding Poll Book, 1837* (Wakefield, 1837). It is significant that they chose the issue of Ireland to headline their campaign, reiterating the point that *national* issues were applicable to the electorates of the West Riding.

> Electors of Bradford! Colours are emblematical of principles. You are CAUTIONED against promising your votes to such a chameleon...[93]

The significance of a candidate's colours is clearly alluded to; they were a public token of his political principles. The particular colours themselves were also symbols: orange represented glory and power; white was an emblem of faithfulness and chastity; blue equated to hope, piety and sincerity. The candidates' colours were gaudily displayed upon flags, banners, cockades and rosettes, rival pubs, hotels and private residences were festooned in ribbons and coloured cards were issued by the candidates to give voters' access to the free hospitality which was a perennial feature of the contests.[94]

Further iconography can be noted on the banners and flags carried by the crowds at election rallies. A description of the Ripon contest of 1832 records:

> Amongst the inscriptions on the flags we noted the following: ...the figure of a slave bending before a West India manager, chained by the neck, hands and feet, exclaiming 'Oh! That I was free', surrounded by the words 'Staveley and Crompton, the poor negroes' advocates'; the figure of Justice weighing the four candidates in the balance, the two Conservatives represented as being found wanting — in her left hand a flag, inscribed 'Behold the nominees of Studley!' on the right of Justice a ship called 'The Reform Victory' in full sail; on her left 'The Tory', in distress...[95]

Favourite images were candles and torches representing liberty and freedom; the scales of justice; and ships which were the traditional symbols of the state and of particular resonance to the British, whose fortunes were so dependant upon the sea.[96] In the example given above it is particularly significant that the ship of the reformers is in full sail

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[93] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/103. Whig campaign poster.

[94] Houghton MSS, E1/7 Milnes' card, blue edged with gold (these colours represented Milnes' liberal-conservative creed).

[95] *Leeds Mercury*, 19 January 1833.

[96] My thanks to Dr Penny Roberts for this reference.

depicting progress and advancement while the Tory ship founders alongside the party's hopes of government.

A final ritual of the election campaigns before the victory dinners and balls took place, was the chairing of the successful candidates through the streets and alleyways of the town. The chairs were vividly, often luridly decorated with the colours and symbols of the new members of parliament. In proprietary boroughs such as Ripon, the electorate were offered some consolation for the lack of participation by the distribution from the chairs of large amounts of coins:

> ...when the two members made their appearance in the Blue chairs much disapprobation was heard but to stop this part of the proceeding, a plentiful supply of money was distributed by the hands of the members from the Blue chairs which drew the attention of the mob. The money system is practised to a great extent in Ripon, but generally in a direct manner, which enables the Tories to return two of their own creed...[97]

The losing candidates could also be chaired and if the successful MPs were particularly unpopular, effigies were carried round the town before being ceremoniously and publicly burnt.[98]

Alcohol was a crucial component of election campaigns and was liberally distributed to all participants in the contests. The expenses of one candidate for the Ripon contest of 1832, for example, reveal charges from one hotel for eighty-five bottles of wine and three hundred and ninety-seven gallons of ale.[99] The figures were no doubt exaggerated by the publican in order to gain maximum profits from the election but the fact that he was comfortable with such figures illustrates the vast quantities of drink that must have been consumed during the two days of the contest. It

[97] *Leeds Mercury*, 27 July 1837.

[98] 'a crowd of 12,000 marched on the committee buildings [in Leeds] where the candidates were dining and burnt effigies of Marshall and Macaulay...', *The Cracker*, 21 December 1832.

[99] Staveley MSS, DD115/26. Expenses of Staveley, 1832.

was immensely difficult to find colour bearers and officials who could be trusted to remain sober during the contests. These tasks were usually given to non-voters who would not be otherwise engaged during the election and who were hired at the rate of a few shillings a day. A commentator on the Bradford election of 1837 noted distastefully, 'with the exception of about two hundred four shillings a day men, of the lowest character, several of whom were found sprawling in the yard of the White Lion [Tory headquarters] in a beastly state of intoxication... Mr Hardy did not appear to have any supporters whatsoever amongst the body of non-electors'.[100] To get round this problem the Whig candidates in Ripon required colour bearers to sign a pledge promising to remain sober:

> We, whose names are undersigned, do hereby agree with the members of the orange committee to carry their flags and banners for five shillings per day, and that we will conduct ourselves with sobriety, and never on any account during the election be drunk or disorderly when on duty; if any of us be so, we agree to be discharged immediately, and to forfeit whatever wages may be due to any of us.[101]

Alcohol had traditionally been used as a tactical instrument to scupper the chances of the rival candidates as well as reward a party's own supporters. After 1832 in the new constituencies of the West Riding, the tactic was continued:

> Owing to the system adopted by the Whigs of kidnapping the Conservative electors and hocussing them with ale and peppermint, or other more potent mixtures, and sending them to distant parts of the country to be kept out of the way till the close of poll, it became necessary for the Blues not only to parade the town [Bradford] in considerable strength but to watch the several outlets of the town in order to prevent the success of such practices...[102]

With these levels of alcohol circulating the town, in addition to practices such as cooping and kidnapping, electoral violence was

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[100] *Leeds Mercury*, 29 July 1837.

[101] Staveley MSS, DD115/26. Declaration of colour bearers.

[102] *Leeds Intelligencer*, 18 September 1841.

commonplace during the West Riding elections of the 1830s.[103] There were several reasons for this. Firstly, elections now took place in the most populous places of the county. The sheer weight of numbers made some conflict inevitable. The existing population, as has already been stated, had its ranks greatly augmented during the period of electioneering and the views of Sir James Ramsden were no doubt echoed by grandees throughout the region, when he wrote to Milton stating, 'I shall not hesitate long between an agricultural and peaceable constituency and a turbulent radical one...'.[104] The second factor was the great public disillusionment which followed the passage of the Reform Act and the steady realisation that little else would change. There were election riots in Huddersfield, Sheffield and Leeds immediately following the 1832 election. In Huddersfield an attempt was made to disrupt proceedings to prevent the election taking place at all:

> Huddersfield this afternoon. The mob has just attacked the poll booths with an intention of seizing the books, but they did not succeed. The poll is consequently adjourned until tomorrow. The town is in an exceedingly riotous state; about 200 special constables have been sworn in an are now organising. The military are near the town and will be sent for. The grossest acts of intimidation are being used by the rabble who profess to be of Wood's party.[105]

In Leeds, trouble began at the nomination of Macaulay, the Whig candidate and was orchestrated by the supporters of the popular Tory candidate, Michael Sadler:

> When John Marshall rose to nominate Thomas Babington Macaulay, a banner depicting half-naked children going to work at Marshall's mill on a winter day inscribed 'a scene in Water Lane at five o'clock in the morning' was raised and fighting broke out. During these struggles the scene became quite alarming;

[103] For a full discussion of electoral violence see Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 137–153.

[104] Wentworth Woodhouse MSS, G9/5. 28 August 1832, J C Ramsden to Lord Milton.

[105] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/6, Anne Lister's diaries, 14 December 1832.

> many desperadoes among Mr Sadler's party pulled out thick staves which had been concealed about them, and struck right and left in a brutal manner...[106]

The imagery of Marshall's infant mill workers struggling to work in the depths of winter summarised the major issue of the election campaign more graphically than any of the speeches. The potency of this visual message was demonstrated by the fierce rioting that broke out as the banner was raised. In Sheffield, riots erupted immediately after the declaration of the result which put the popular candidates, Samuel Bailey and Thomas Asline Ward in third and fourth place. There was a spontaneous outpouring of dismay and attacks were made on prominent Whig buildings in the town. Although the special constables and troops were in attendance at all three election riots, it was only at Sheffield that they found it necessary to deploy weapons. The dragoons fired on the mob leaving five dead, including two fourteen year old children.[107]

These early emissions of violence were largely unplanned and were characteristic of the confusion and turbulent public emotions that followed the passage of the Reform Act. In contrast, the region's largest election riot, at Wakefield during the nomination of candidates for the West Riding contest in 1837, was widely expected and even planned for. An early edict from the High Sheriff of Wakefield decreed:

> In order to avoid confusion or disturbance it is arranged that the bands and flag bearers belonging to all the candidates will on meeting in the street or elsewhere pass each other on the right hand side of the road. And as soon as the candidates arrive at the hustings they must retire from the court house yard and leave the hall Ings altogether...[108]

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[106] *Leeds Mercury*, 11 December 1832. Macaulay wrote an account of the same scene, 'we have had a most stormy meeting for the nomination — twenty thousand at least, — a tremendous clamour, — a bloody fight, — half a dozen fellows lodged in prison and half a dozen more in the Infirmary...'. 10 December 1832, Thomas Babington Macaulay to Hannah Macaulay, cited in T Pinney (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, 5 volumes (Cambridge, 1974), volume 2, p. 209.

[107] *Sheffield Local Register* (Sheffield, 1832).

[108] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/75. West Riding poster, 1837.

Despite these preparations the convergence of the crowds of opposing supporters that had marched from Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Halifax, Leeds and Bradford meant that violence was virtually inevitable. The earlier defeat of Oastler at Huddersfield rankled with his supporters and attempts to clear the court house yard of spectators was viewed by radical Liberals and Tories alike as an assault upon their lawful rights to view the election. [109] The violence was particularly bloody and destructive but amazingly there were no severe casualties and the mobs had dispersed, having made their point, by the time the troops arrived:

> They say that there were 40,000 assembled in the town and it was all confusion and many shops were closed so we were glad to get home by back ways and side lanes. A little before 2 o'clock Mr Scatcherd came back in a great fright to tell us that there was a riot in the town. It began when the Yellows from Huddersfield came up with the Blues and tried to drive them off their ground. They had evidently come for that purpose as they were armed with sticks and bludgeons... the soldiers arrived at about 5 o'clock but by then the mob in the town had dispersed but there were several skirmishes on Westgate Common... we went with my Aunt along Wood Street and what a sight it was! Not a pane of glass and in the Woodman's Inn [Tory headquarters] many of the window frames had been torn out and coping stones pulled from the wall to be used as brickbats. The iron gate and railings of the court house were broken off and the windows broken. It was a desolate place and groups of people were gathered together talking it all over...[110]

These examples of communal violence, whether planned or spontaneous can be supported by evidence of organised campaigns of intimidation on individual voters. In Bradford, for example, in the particularly raucous 1837 election contest, there were claims from both the Liberals and the Conservatives of coercion. Placards were issued on both sides, detailing the claims of individuals who alleged that they had been victims of violent duress. An extract from the Whig's version offered rewards for information:

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[109] *Halifax Guardian*, 1 August 1837 gives a graphic 'blow by blow' account of the riot.

[110] A K Jacques (ed.), *Merrie Wakefield: Diary of Clara Clarkson, 1811–1889 of Alverthorpe Hall, Wakefield* (Wakefield, 1971), pp. 99–100.

> Whereas it is reported that a violent and brutal assault was committed by two men upon a person named Dobson Brearley as he was leaving the White Lion Inn on Tuesday last... And whereas it is also reported that on the same evening a person forced himself into a crowd in front of the Bowling Green Inn [Whig head quarters], waving Blue cards and favours, abusing Messrs. Lister and Busfeild and daring and endeavouring to provoke the Friends of those Gentlemen to a breach of the Peace. This is to give notice that whoever will give such evidence as shall lead to the conviction of the offenders, or any of them, in either case, shall receive a reward of Ten Pounds.
>
> And whereas it is reported that two men have been authorised to employ, at the rate of Four shillings a day, a number of persons to make disturbances, so as to prevent the Liberal candidates from obtaining a fair hearing and of intimidating and overawing their friends. Now, notice is hereby given that if any case of intimidation or violence by any such persons, or any others, to any party be brought to the committee at the Bowling Green Inn, such steps shall immediately be taken as will lead to the summary punishment of the offender...[111]

Such a notice, of course, was carefully designed to inflame passions rather than offer responsible recourse to the law. It encouraged bands of thugs supporting the Whig cause to roam the streets of Bradford, looking for Tory agitators to bring them to face their 'summary punishment' before claiming their ten pound reward. Organised intimidatory campaigns were also widespread in the Oastlerite elections of 1837 and Macaulay, in the Leeds contest of 1832 accused Sadler, erstwhile member for Newark of importing tricks more suited to a rotten borough in the unreformed system:

> An attempt has been made to introduce into Leeds all the corruption and intimidation which disgraced the elections of Newark: an ingenious malevolence has employed against us arts such as even Newark never witnessed. Slander and hypocrisy, threats and caresses, bludgeons and gin, have done their worst: and the result is that the cause of Reform has triumphed...[112]

These instances of electoral violence, both organised and spontaneous, employed by the mob or by individuals, often involved participation by society's underworld mercenaries, who whatever the issue would turn out at election times spoiling for a fight. Electors were rarely

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[111] Busfeild MSS, 51D79/49. 20 July 1837, Order of Lister and Busfeild's committee.

[112] *Leeds Mercury*, 15 December 1832. Although Macaulay, as the MP for Calne could hardly claim that he had been part of a free, democratic process.

instigators of this brand of mob hooliganism. Thus the five who were killed at the election riot at Sheffield in 1832 and those implicated in the riot at Halifax in 1835 were not on the electoral register.[113] However, there must be some division made between violence for violence sake, for which elections had always offered a rowdy opportunity; and the sudden and bitter intense reaction when a result was read out that shattered popular expectations. The commotion and disorder of contested elections had always been an occasion when all in society, high or low, the gentry or the dregs were brought down to a common base; and distasteful or not, marked a rare chance for popular participation and the communication of political ideas.

Popular political interest was also raised by the vast amounts of propaganda spilling onto the streets during the election campaigns. Election squibs, handbills, pamphlets and placards all helped to spread the party message. These were produced in their hundreds and even thousands for a particularly bitter contest.[114] Election songs and ballads were commonplace with bands being employed to march round the town playing and singing the signature tunes of their candidate. These informal and unregulated snippets of election literature were supplemented by the vast expansion of newspapers, both stamped and unstamped, in the towns of the West Riding during the 1830s.[115] Halifax, for example, boasted at least

[113] Calderdale Archives, HASB:9/4. Brief for the plaintiff John Holdsworth who claimed damages to his home in Snow Hill, Halifax during the election riot on 7 January 1835.

[114] Thus the Busfeild Ferrand collection of election ephemera (51D79), contains over two hundred items, mainly produced by Busfeild's committee and issued on the Tory side. O'Gorman, *Voters, Parties and Patrons*, p. 139, has examples of 42,000 pieces of election literature produced for the Carlisle by-election in 1816 and 2,000 for the county contest of Nottinghamshire in 1812.

[115] For more detail see, D Read, *Press and People, 1790–1850. Opinion in Three English Cities* (London, 1961).

three newspapers during the decade and Sheffield could support four, all with reasonable circulation figures[116]:

Table 2.4 Average weekly circulation of Sheffield newspapers in 1839

Newspaper	*Weekly circulation*
Sheffield Independent (Whig)	2019
Sheffield Mercury (Liberal)	1759
Sheffield Iris (Radical)	923
Sheffield Patriot (Tory)	500

The central position in election campaigns of the press, printed media and public opinion can be illustrated with an example from Sheffield in 1832. Among the banners and flags carried in the processions to the hustings was an effigy of Caxton with two printing presses in operation which were running off the songs of Sheffield's famous poet, Ebenezer Elliott. A verse of one of Elliott's poems was highlighted:

> Oh pallid want! Oh labour stark!
> Behold, we bring the second Ark!
> The Press! The Press! The Press![117]

The local press barons were all influential in parliamentary politics. Edward Baines from Leeds (*Leeds Mercury*), Robert Leader from Sheffield (*Sheffield Independent*) and William Byles from Bradford (*Bradford Observer*) were central figures in the elites of their respective towns and their newspapers helped to shape public opinion and win support for campaigns for municipal corporation, further parliamentary

116 *Sheffield Local Register.*

117 Cited in R E Turner, *James Silk Buckingham, 1786–1855* (London, 1955), p. 250.

reform and free trade.[118] The fact that these men were all central figures in the Whig-Liberal establishments of their particular towns encouraged the formation of newspapers supporting the rival interest:

> To the Conservative public of Bradford
>
> It has long been a source of regret that the Conservative feeling of Bradford is not sufficiently represented by the press, nor its important local concerns sufficiently recognised by an accredited organ. A journal is on all hands confessedly required, which while it advocates with honest and enlightened zeal the cause of conservatism, shall to the public of Bradford be a Newspaper in the most enlarged and comprehensible sense of the term...[119]

These early nineteenth century newspapers were widely read and their editors became local heroes. Joshua Hobson of Huddersfield was one such figure. To circumvent the law requiring newspapers to pay a stamp duty of fourpence per copy, he built his own wooden press in Swan Yard, Huddersfield. A popular, local figure — he was secretary of the Huddersfield Political Union — he started his own newspaper, *The Voice of the West Riding*. After a year, Somerset House intervened and prosecuted Hobson for non-payment of stamp duty. He chose, however, to go to prison rather than pay a fine and was escorted in a triumphant procession to the gates of Wakefield gaol. In prison, his supporters paid for him to have his own room and to employ a servant. On his release, he moved to Leeds and started a new radical newspaper, the *Northern Star*.[120]

The production of election literature; the provision of colours, bands and flags, the canvassing electors and the nurturing of a constituency were all part of the costs of election borne by the candidates.

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[118] D James, 'William Byles and the Bradford Observer' in D G Wright and J A Jowitt (eds), *Victorian Bradford* (Bradford, 1981), pp. 115–136.

[119] Bradford Archives, MM 55/2. 12 October 1841, poster.

[120] Brook, *The Story of Huddersfield* (Huddersfield, 1968), p. 124. J Halstead, *'The Voice of the West Riding:* Promoters and Supporters of a Provincial Unstamped Newspaper, 1833–34' in C Wrigley and J Shepherd (eds), *On the Move: Essays in Labour and Transport History Presented to Philip Bagwell* (London, 1991), pp. 22–57.

In the old and new constituencies of the West Riding after 1832, figures did not reach the legendary level of those during the Yorkshire election of 1807.[121] There could, however be substantial sums involved. Anne Lister wrote in 1835 that, 'Mr Edmund Lascelles had declined being a candidate for our Riding because his father, Lord Harewood, thought his election doubtful and it would cost us £10,000'.[122] A detailed account of the expenses for the Liberal candidate in the Ripon election of 1832 also runs into thousands of pounds:

> altogether thirty-six inn keepers unfurled the orange flag, and the total amount of refreshments they dispensed to the 'free and independent electors' was 1701*l* 13*s* 3*d*. Other expenses such as printing, hire of horses and carriages etc., amounted to 594*l* 5*s* 1*d*. The bands of music cost 162*l* 2*s*; the flag bearers etc., 43*l*; the dinner and ball, 494*l* 19*s* 10*d*; coals 50*l*. Total: 3046*l* 0*s* 2*d*![123]

Expenses did not just fall upon candidates. It was common — especially in the new constituencies — for individuals to subscribe sums towards election expenses, although of course, the candidate was expected to bear the lion's share. Anne Lister, noted in her diary, 'A heavy subscription was wanted for the county. I said that as Anné and I would be absent they must not expect anything from us. The borough experience [Halifax] equalled £600 the last time'. These figures make the £500 which William Aldam's father expected the costs at Leeds would *not* exceed in 1841, appear wildly optimistic.[124] To these immediate costs could be added the expense of providing for the constituency between elections: sending Christmas gifts to the workhouse; endowing local schools and supporting unfortunate widows and orphans.[125] Expenses in the newly enfranchised boroughs of the West Riding, however, appear to have been

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[121] E A Smith, 'The Yorkshire elections of 1806 and 1807', *Northern History*, 2 (1967), pp. 69–90.

[122] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/6, Anne Lister's diaries, 4 January 1835.

[123] Staveley MSS, DD115/26. Staveley's account of his expenses, plus bills and receipts.

[124] Aldam MSS, uncatalogued. 19 May 1841, William Aldam to William Aldam junior.

[125] O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 141–164.

kept to a minimum and to have cost hundreds rather than thousands of pounds. When compared to figures for Ripon and Pontefract which ran into many thousands for each side; the contrast between the old practices and the new appears stark.[126]

The extra expense which all candidates dreaded was the cost of contesting the result of the election by petitioning to parliament. The cost averaged around one thousand pounds, but could be greatly increased in complicated cases.[127] Until, 1839 the committees for hearing cases of disputed elections were organised on the system that George Grenville established in 1770 of committees of fifteen MPs. In 1839 this was replaced, following an Act introduced by Robert Peel, by a committee chosen by the Speaker.[128]

Table 2.5 Petitions presented to the Commons, 1832–1841.[129]

	Contests	*Petitions presented*	*%*
West Riding	39	9	23.0
Great Britain	943	112	11.8

Fortunately, petitioning had become relatively rare by the 1830s, following a downward trend from the late eighteenth century.[130] Only nine petitions were presented from the West Riding between 1832 and 1841 and

[126] Staveley MSS, DD115/26 and Houghton MSS, uncatalogued. 18 January 1838, M Mitton to R P Milnes, 'It is calculated that to pay what there will be to pay, will require £1500 or nearly that'.

[127] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 133–4.

[128] *Ibid.*, p. 135 and O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 165.

[129] Sources: Bean, *Parliamentary Representation* and Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 431 and 441.

[130] O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 168.

of these, only one was successful.[131] Even so, this meant that nearly a quarter of all contests would eventually be contested in the West Riding, compared with a national figure of around eleven per cent. Petitions were occasionally 'frivolous and vexatious', to use the words of the Commons' committee. An example was Henry Gompertz's petition of the Pontefract result of 1837 from his prison cell, which scuppered the fortunes of a more serious attempt by Sir Culling Eardley Smith, who wished the Commons to examine the notorious practice of the candidates paying electors 'head money' in return for their votes.[132] In general, the cost of bringing a petition was too high for such frivolity and the petitions emanating from the West Riding were concerned with genuine cases of misrepresentation, bribery or intimidation. The only successful case was in the Wakefield election of 1841 where the Liberal candidate, Joseph Holdsworth had been appointed the returning officer by Lord Milton, the High Sheriff of Yorkshire. Although he did not act in this capacity during the election, a technical breach of the law was judged to have taken place and his votes were struck from the record, thus giving the victory to William Sebright Lascelles.[133] Petitioning was used as an additional tactic to draw attention to anomalies in the system. Thus Oastler petitioned against the result of the Huddersfield election in 1837, not because he believed that the procedures of the contest were in question but to highlight what he saw as the iniquities of the Ramsden family treating Huddersfield like their own pocket borough. Sir Culling Eardley Smith used the same strategy at Pontefract. Voters at Halifax brought forward a petition in 1835 following Wortley's victory by one vote and the ensuing violence. In all these cases the petitioners reflected the popular concern about the return of certain

[131] This was a paltry success rate of 11.1 per cent, compared with a national success rate of nearly fifty per cent of all petitions presented.

[132] See Chapter VI.

[133] Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, p. 1098.

candidates and therefore petitioning could be said to be a vital tool for those demanding free, democratic and publicly accountable elections.

The machinery, the nuts and bolts of electoral politics after 1832 in the West Riding had suffered few adaptations. Registration procedures and the growth of the provincial press brought new phases to the process and gave them added colour. The ritual and ceremony of electoral politics though was woven firmly into the fabric of history and the new industrial towns adapted the old habits and customs to cope with their vast populations. The views of the general public were always at the centre of these rituals. Despite all the faults of an open electoral system, with such a restricted franchise, it was probably beneficial that the public, electors and non-electors alike, took a central role in proceedings.

Chapter III

The West Riding Voter — A Profile

A Middle-class electorate?

Who was enfranchised by the Reform Act of 1832? This has become a thorny question for social and political historians alike. The trite statement that 'the Reform Act enfranchised the middle classes', the view popularised by the nineteenth century Whig commentators such as Bagehot has been subject to intense challenge. A new consensus has been established, emphasising the continuity between the old system and the new, with some historians arguing that the pre-reform electorate was more 'democratic' than that established by the architects of the reform bill.[1] The notion of the type of person enfranchised has also moved away from the view that they were dominated by the new industrial entrepreneurs, to concentrate on their 'pre-industrial' character.[2] In fact, the question 'did the Reform Act enfranchise the middle classes?' has now become two distinct queries: 'who, exactly gained the vote in 1832' and 'did the Reform Act enfranchise the new industrial bourgeoisie?'.

Political historians have now been drawn into the debate initiated by social historians about the evolution of the middle classes in nineteenth century Europe. Opinion has moved away from a primarily economic interpretation of the success of the early-nineteenth century middle class which stressed the importance of the industrial entrepreneurs to an explanation which centres on the commercial and professional sectors.[3] This view stresses a slow evolution of a

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[1] Speck, *Tory and Whig*, p. 17 and O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 199.

[2] Vincent, *Poll Books*, p. 24.

[3] P Pilbeam, *The Middle Classes in Europe, 1789–1914* (Basingstoke, 1990); J Barry and C Brooks (eds) *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550–1800* (Basingstoke, 1994); Morris, *Class, Sect and Party.*

distinctive middle class which has much in common with the middling sorts of people in early modern England rather than the sharp divergence stressed by previous generations of economic historians. The current orthodoxy is supported by those who seek to turn the spotlight on the 'persistence of the old regime' and who seek to establish that, certainly in the early nineteenth century, and perhaps as late as 1914, the aristocratic elites retained their economic, social, political and cultural dominance.[4] The pendulum has swung away from viewing the parvenu middle classes as the dominant group in society; instead they were outwitted by the assertiveness of the traditional landed elites, adopted a deferential attitude towards them and were assimilated into their ranks. The successful elements in nineteenth century society were not the new industrial middle classes but the aristocracy in partnership with the commercial elites of the metropolis, a neo-mercantilist class who dominated political, social and economic state institutions.[5] This work brings us full circle round to the theories of political historians such as D C Moore who argue that the 1832 Reform Act was an assertive measure by the 'old' forces in politics who wished to safeguard their own position and thus engineered a piece of legislation that would incorporate into the system a small section of the middle class who would, with them, form a new political elite along much the same lines as the one that dominated the unreformed electoral system.[6]

For a re-statement of the Marxist/economic interpretation of the formation of the middle class see: Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society.*

[4] A Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York, 1981).

[5] *Ibid.* And W Rubenstein, 'Wealth, Elites and Class structure in Modern Britain', *Past and Present*, 76 (1977) pp. 99–126.

[6] Moore, *The Politics of Deference* and 'Concession or Cure: The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act', *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966), pp. 39–59. See also Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform.*

A common problem faced by all who study in this area is one of identifying the middle class of early nineteenth century England.[7] It is clear that the middle class contain a number of distinct and separate \groups. The industrial entrepreneurs are perhaps the most identifiable as a 'new' group within society but as has been seen, it would be wrong to over-stress either their numbers or prominence within the class as a whole. A politically important group were the professionals, such as lawyers and bankers and the new bureaucratic sector of officials and public servants who were replacing the traditional unpaid burghers of early modern urban government. Ownership of property was an important factor, in identifying the group, particularly because it was property that was the key to the post-1832 franchise. However, 'property' could include small industrial concerns; the shops, forges and workshops of the petty bourgeois shopkeepers and craftsmen; the homes and workplaces of millionaire bankers and developers; as well as the farms and small-holdings of yeomen tenant farmers who comprised an important section of the county electorate. In fact, the middle class was so diverse that it could be argued that virtually all those enfranchised by 1832 were members of one sub-group or other of the middle class — the argument is, then, how influential were the 'new' industrialists within the electorate as a whole, how did they vote and what influenced them in their choice of political party?

It has been widely argued that these new entrepreneurs who tended to be nonconformist dissenters in their religious preferences and radical or liberal in their politics were overwhelmed by the traditional Tory Anglican aristocratic-dominated elites who had organised local and national politics for much of the eighteenth century.[8] Thus, again the emphasis is on continuity with the past rather than a sharp

[7] There is a view that the middle class are so diverse that 'any general statement that purports to include them all must be fallacious', G Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London, 1962), p. 6.

[8] Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society*, p. 19 adopts this interpretation, for example.

divergence because of industrialisation. However, in the newly formed towns of the West Riding, it seems inconceivable that these new elements in society would not play a central part.

The principal problem faced by electoral historians in their efforts to discover which 'class' of people were enfranchised by the Reform Act, and whether they differed appreciably from the unreformed electorate, is that they have very few tools available to aid them in the identification process. Despite the current trend, where the emphasis is on constructing a more diverse definition of the middle class which includes political, social and cultural dimensions; it is still essential to use economic determinants to characterise the middle class. Early nineteenth century poll books and electoral registers which identify voters usually contain only minimal information on economic status and often the political historian has only the blunt instrument of occupational title to use for analysis.[9]

Occupational titles are notoriously ambiguous and are an unreliable source to use for the fabrication of a social structure. Electoral historians face a methodological minefield when venturing to use them for analysis.[10] Poll books are littered with cryptic descriptions of occupational status which obscure the realities. A typical example is that of Samuel Margerison who describes himself as a spinner in the Bradford Poll Book of 1837, but who, in fact, was a member of the Margerison dynasty which owned a large textile factory employing over three hundred people in 1834.[11] He died in 1853 leaving an estate

[9] Most electoral historians recognise the short-comings of using occupational titles as an indication of the economic status of individual voters. However, John Vincent adopted a bullish attitude to the problem asserting that though links between voting behaviour and wealth could be obtained, it was not sufficiently important to do so because 'occupation taken by and large gives an implicit and politically sufficient assessment of wealth without taking the matter further by enquiries into the means of particular individuals'. *Poll Books*, p. 6.

[10] This minefield has not acted as a deterrent however, and most historians using poll books have also attempted occupational analysis where this was appropriate. See Appendix II for further information.

[11] Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society*, p. 597.

worth sixty thousand pounds.[12] There is nothing that differentiates Margerison from a small craftsman working in his own workshop only just qualifying for the franchise. 'Labourer' and 'merchant' are two equally value-ridden labels and thus any attempt at an occupational analysis of the electorate must draw attention to the serious defects in the approach. Unfortunately, there is a serious lack of alternatives that historians can use. The decennial censuses suffer from the same problem as the Poll Books. They use occupational title rather than any other economic criteria to characterise status. There is no attempt to differentiate between journeymen or master craftsmen and rarely an indication of whether workers rank as employer or employee. The most accurate representation of economic status comes from linking up poll books with rate books but this presents difficulties of its own.[13] The rateable value of a property only gives a partial indication of economic status. Rate books are usually organised street by street rather than person by person, thus only the voter's main property can be assessed. If he has many properties or if his assets are largely comprised of other sources then an incomplete picture of his wealth will be given. Further dilemmas are presented when comparative analyses are carried out. Rateable values were highly idiosyncratic and rooted in local factors and thus cross-borough comparisons are problematical. A rateable value of ten pounds may be high in one area and middling in another, depending upon the type of property which typifies the area. The information in the rate books can also be shown as rateable values or rates paid which can make comparisons difficult. The Sheffield rate books for example, give information for rates paid per half year (see Table 3.1) whereas the Bradford rate books give rateable values only.[14] Thus the two sets of figures are incomparable. The Sheffield figures

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

[13] For a discussion of record linkage problems see Appendix II.

[14] Sheffield Archives, Sheffield City Rate Books, March, 1835 and T Koditschek, 'Class Formation and the Bradford Bourgeoisie', (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1981), pp. 302–3.

ranging from five to over ten pounds and the Bradford figures from ten to over one thousand pounds.

Table 3.1 Rates paid by Sheffield voters, 1835.

Rates Paid	*Voters (%)*
Less than £5	51.3
£5–£10	24.3
£10 and over	24.4

This lacuna in alternative sources means that the electoral historian has to be resigned, therefore, to using occupational title as a method of discovering the social structure of the electorate who were enfranchised after 1832. There are further methodological problems encountered when these occupational titles have to be reduced into meaningful categories for analysis. The Poll books for the boroughs of the West Riding contained nearly six hundred separate occupational titles and thus for any comparative analysis to be carried out some grouping of these titles was essential. There is no ideal and any classification can lead to allegations of reductionism, the most recent barrage of criticism coming in a review of O'Gorman's survey of Hanoverian voters by Derek Beales:

> I cannot see how any worthwhile conclusions about the relation between social and political divisions can be drawn from an occupational classification so insensitive to both status and income. Surely the computer could have been set to see what correlations it could find, not imprisoned within this ludicrous framework.[15]

O'Gorman is correct in countering this objection. After all any classification can only be as good as the data from which it is originally drawn and, as demonstrated above, occupational titles are incomplete and often misleading, therefore any classification of

[15] D Beales, 'The Electorate Before and After 1832: The Right to Vote and the Opportunity', *Parliamentary History*, 11 (1992), p. 142.

occupations is fated to compound these ambiguities.[16] In his reply to Beales, O'Gorman ignores, however, the wider point made, that any one-dimensional survey of occupations will always be subject to such criticism. The answer, is to adopt a multi-dimensional approach and use a combination of various employment classifications[17] and a focus on certain key individual occupations to counter accusations of bias and irrelevancy.[18]

Table 3.2 Number of voters engaged in 'industrial' occupations in selected West Riding constituencies.

Constituency	*'Industrial' occupations (%)*
Bradford (1837)	40.4
Halifax (1837)	38.0
Huddersfield (1834)	44.8
Knaresborough (1841)	18.3
Sheffield (1835)	47.9

One such division, for instance, gives an indication of the importance of the new bourgeois elements of society amongst the voting populations. Electors were classified according to whether they were directly employed by the industrial occupations of the West Riding — cotton, woollen and worsted textile manufacture; the metal

[16] O'Gorman's full refutation is given in 'The Electorate before and after 1832: A reply', pp. 174–5

[17] For example, Armstrong who exhaustively analysed the process of occupational classification argued that 'we would wish to aim at allocating individuals according to two main principles, (a) by *industrial grouping* — so that we can trace the economic contours of a society and the bases on which these rest, and (b) *social ranking*.' W A Armstrong, 'The use of information about occupation' in E A Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 191.

[18] Although this approach is counter to that adopted by Armstrong who rejected analysis of specific occupations, 'as a general rule, occupation may be said to be important only insofar as it enables us to allocate individuals to groupings....' *Ibid.*, p. 192. However, in view of the subjectivity of *any* system of classification, using the extra dimension of individual occupation analysis seems to be desirable. As has been argued above, in certain instances an individual occupational title has already been subject to some, unknown classification and thus further grouping would only compound the ambiguities.

industry; chemicals and dyeing; or coal. The picture which is given by Table 3.2 is of a totally different hue than the one painted by John Vincent in his survey of Victorian voters. Only the Knaresborough electorate residing in a rural market town could be said to be of a 'pre-industrial' nature; the new constituencies were well-represented by the industrial sector.[19] This is despite several factors which worked against the parvenu, entrepreneurial section of society. Firstly, the residence requirement enshrined in the 1832 Reform Act mitigated against the highly fluid societies of the early nineteenth century. For example, in Bradford, as many as a third of all householders had occupied their dwellings for less than three years.[20] A large proportion of the entrepreneurial class were migrants into the industrial towns drawn by the employment prospects, and the residence requirements of the Reform Act discriminated against this section of the population. Secondly, in addition to this geographical mobility, early nineteenth-century society was marked by a comparable social mobility with much movement on the peripheries of the working and lower middle class.[21] It was these industrial sectors of the middle class that experienced most mobility with the professional and commercial sectors remaining relatively static. Thirdly, the system of classification itself, obviously excludes a proportion of voters who could legitimately come from this 'entrepreneurial' sector, solely because of the occupational description they gave of themselves to the polling clerk. Thus electors described merely as 'merchants' were excluded from the industrial grouping, on grounds of ambiguity, although there were doubtless many involved at the sharp end of industrialisation; however, wool, iron or lime

[19] This should not surprise us considering that Vincent admits that in his selection of poll books, 'the bias is strongly towards the medium-sized constituency of 10,000 to 50,000 people, normally a market, county, or cathedral town rather than a manufacturing centre...'. Vincent, *Poll Books*, p. 4.

[20] Koditschek, 'Class Formation and the Bradford Bourgeoisie', pp. 923.

[21] For a comprehensive assessment of social mobility in England in the nineteenth century, see A Miles, 'How open was nineteenth century British Society? Social mobility and equality of opportunity, 1839–1914' in A Miles and D Vincent (eds), *Building European Society. Occupational Change and Social Mobility in Europe, 1840–1940* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 2–39.

merchants were included. There would also be other electors who, though employed in the service sector, received much of their income from supporting the industrialists, and thus who were closely related to this grouping within the middle class.

This impression of a burgeoning industrial sector within the West Riding electorate is enhanced by a more general classification of the voters.[22] (Table 3.3) Again, Knaresborough is distinguished from the recently enfranchised boroughs, the structure of its electorate resembling the familiar pattern of a 'blunted diamond' noted by O'Gorman and Phillips in their surveys of unreformed boroughs.[23] Knaresborough has a strong agricultural sector and a large retailing core typical of the small market borough in the centre of a rich agricultural hinterland. The smaller distribution of merchants and craftsmen add to this impression of a diverse, mixed economy. The industrial centres though, are characterised by their large mercantile, capitalist elites who provided the resources for the drive towards industrialisation. Together with the skilled group of craftsmen, many of whom were engaged in the dominant industries of the town, the vision of the post-1832 electorate in the West Riding is of one heavily influenced by the industrial classes. The unskilled/labouring classes were not, however, wiped out by the introduction of a substantial property franchise by the 1832 Act and remained a small, but not diminishing portion of the electorates throughout the 1830s.

[22] For more information on the rationale behind the selection of occupational categories see Appendix II.

[23] The 'blunted diamond' analogy is used by O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 217. The occupational structure of the unreformed electorate is outlined in pp. 199–223. See also, Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, pp. 250–256.

	Constituency				
Classification	*Bradford*	*Halifax*	*Huddersfield*	*Knaresborough*	*Sheffield*
	1837	*1837*	*1837*	*1841*	*1835*
Gentry/Professionals	12.0	14.8	9.1	14.9	14.4
Merchant/Manufacturers	20.1	20.9	33.4	12.0	27.1
Retailers	20.5	21.4	21.0	38.0	25.0
Skilled Craftsmen	27.0	36.7	24.3	19.2	26.6
Labourers	4.7	3.4	1.9	5.3	5.5
Agriculturalists	15.6	2.8	10.3	10.6	1.4

Table 3.3 Occupational categorisation of selected West Riding constituencies.

Table 3.4 The drink industry and the West Riding electorate (selected constituencies).

Constituency	*Drink industry (%)*
Bradford (1837)	7.4
Halifax (1837)	6.1
Huddersfield (1837)	13.2
Knaresborough (1841)	18.3
Sheffield (1835)	10.5

The potential influence of the drink industry, within the West Riding constituencies should also be noted. (Table 3.4) The industry represented a sleeping giant which, if mobilised; as in the Sheffield election of 1835, where one of the candidates, James Silk Buckingham was described as holding 'zealous temperance views'; could form a powerful pressure group.[24]

Finally, perhaps something should be said of the fluctuating size of the agricultural sector within the West Riding electorates. Unusually, Bradford has the highest number of voters centred in pastoral occupations. Over fifteen per cent of the electorate were engaged in the agrarian economy. This was because of the compact nature of the town itself and further analysis reveals that over eighty per cent of the agriculturists dwelt in the outlying manorial estate villages of Bowling, Horton and Manningham. The architects of the Reform Bill paid attention to the demands of the opposition and included this semi-rural hinterland in the parliamentary constituency of Bradford to counter the power of the industrialists who dominated the rest of the electorate. A similar explanation can be reached for the farmers who made up ten per cent of the Huddersfield electorate. Most reside in the parish rather than the township of Huddersfield. Those

[24] Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, p. 1175.

drawing up the parliamentary constituency of Huddersfield consciously decided to include the rural areas surrounding the town, although here the motive of the reformers was to counter the dominant influence of Sir James Ramsden and to mount a defence against Huddersfield becoming a pocket borough.

A further dimension can be added to this analysis of the economic and social nature of the West Riding electorate, by adding information given in selected poll books on the property titles which describe the property used by the electorate to qualify them for the vote.[25] The hazards in using property titles for a definitive assessment of the electorate are far greater than those identified for occupational analysis. The opportunities for ambiguity are compounded by the fact that between one half and three-quarters of the electorate used their family home for enfranchisement purposes. However, the use of property titles does add another dimension to this study of the electorate and, more importantly, provides a starting point for the social analysis of electorates where there is no occupational information given. Although there are ambiguities present in the property titles, a survey of the Bradford poll book of 1837 where both property and occupational titles are given, illustrates that if there is an awareness of the particular, local characteristics of a population, it is possible to resolve these satisfactorily. In the West Riding, titles which are particularly problematic are those of 'mill' and of 'shop'. The former could include rural corn and wheat grinders as well as the industrial textile workers; whilst 'shop' was synonymous with 'workshop' in the early nineteenth century. In Bradford, however, although the property description 'mill' did throw up one corn miller; over ninety per cent were engaged in textile work — specifically spinning. Similarly, the descriptor 'warehouse' was equivalent to a

[25] A full analysis of property titles taken from poll books as a means of the social analysis of urban populations is explored in R J Morris, 'Property titles and the use of British urban poll books for social analysis', *Urban History Yearbook*, (1983), pp. 29–38.

wool stapler in all but three cases (these were clothier, draper and gentleman). More difficult was the term 'shop' which was used by professionals, retailers, craftsmen and those involved in distribution. Thus, the decision was made to exclude the property title 'shop' from any categorisation of the electorate, unless there was supporting information.

Table 3.5 A social analysis of the Bradford and Wakefield electorates in 1841 using property titles.

	Bradford (%)	*Wakefield (%)*
Agriculture	14.8	4.3
Commerce	1.6	1.3
Craft	0.2	0.3
Distribution	24.0	11.1
Domestic	49.0	75.5
Manufacturing	8.4	6.6
Professional	0.1	–
Quarrying	0.3	0.1
Service	1.6	0.8

The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3.5. Despite the large numbers of voters using the title 'house' to claim the franchise some tentative conclusions can be surmised. The large percentage of those engaged in agricultural pursuits in Bradford which emerged from the occupational survey is repeated in the analysis of property titles. Otherwise the most numerous categories focus on distribution and manufacturing in both constituencies; again emphasising the 'industrial' nature of the electorates. The specific areas of industrial enterprise (where these can be isolated) are dominated by textiles although there is evidence of stone quarrying, chemicals and metal work, in addition.

The 1832 Reform Act had an undoubted effect in the West Riding. Ranks of bourgeois industrial entrepreneurs, previously unenfranchised, swelled the electorate in the major urban centres of the region. Apart from the urban voters who had been incorporated into, and who had formed a small percentage of, the pre–1832 constituency of Yorkshire these were men who had been excluded from the political nation, but who were now giving the electorate its definitive shape. Taken as a whole, the county and borough electorates of the reformed West Riding would have been unrecognisable to the canvassers and political commentators of the unreformed system. The profile had changed sharply from semi-rural constituencies dominated by yeomen farmers and traditional market town crafts to a decidedly urban, industrial electorate.

There are distinct patterns of voting behaviour that emerged from the occupational grouping of the West Riding electorate. Firstly, there is a strong correlation ($r^2 = 0.79$) between constituencies with a high proportion of non-industrial voters and Tory voting: thus the more concentrated a constituency was in one particular economic sector, the less likely it was to support Tory candidates. There were some concerted attempts by individual Tories — especially those who preached the doctrine of factory reform — to win over the electorates of Huddersfield, Bradford and Leeds to their cause, but these were largely unsuccessful. The high correlation between Toryism and the traditional occupational biases of the electorate illustrates too, that there were supra-local (if not national) factors linking voting preferences. Of course, there were specific constituencies that defied expectations and those dominated by peculiarly local circumstances; but slowly certain psephological trends were beginning to emerge.

This impression is reinforced by a comparison of the West Riding electorates with detailed work on Shrewsbury and on a range of English constituencies by Phillips and Nossiter. (See Table 3.6) The

Constituency							
Bradford	*Halifax*	*Halifax*	*Huddersfield*	*Huddersfield*	*Knaresborough*	*Shrewsbury*	*Various*
1837	*1835*	*1837*	*1834*	*1837*	*1841*	*1832–41*	*1832–66*
G (63.1)	A (66.7)	A (78.3)	U (66.7)	A (83.9)	G (79.3)	G (67.2)	A (80.4)
A (52.1)	G (62.0)	U (55.5)	A (58.3)	G (49.1)	U (72.9)	M (50.2)	G (54.1)
M (51.2)	U (58.3)	G (53.5)	G (45.0)	M (47.5)	A (63.2)	U (47.2)	M (42.2)
U (47.0)	M (48.8)	M (39.8)	M (42.7)	R (40.1)	M (60.9)	R (45.0)	S (41.9)
S (44.4)	S (35.7)	S (27.5)	R (36.9)	S (39.6)	R (58.1)	S (47.2)	R (34.4)
R (43.6)	R (35.0)	R (26.8)	S (32.7)	U (16.7)	S (55.5)		

Key: G = Gentry and Professionals; M = Merchants and Manufacturers; S = Skilled Craftsmen; R = Retailers; U = Unskilled and Labourers; A = Agricultural

Source: West Riding poll books; Shrewsbury data averaged over four general elections from 1832–1841, J A Phillips, The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs (Oxford, 1992), p. 268; last column average of seventeen English constituencies, T Nossiter, Voting Behaviour, 1832–1872, Political Studies, 18 (1968), p. 381. Note, the last two columns have similar but not directly comparable categories

Table 3.6 Tory vote (%) ranked by occupational category.

precise percentages involved may differ (not surprisingly) but the overwhelming impression across a wide range of constituencies is that the agricultural workers and the 'genteel' sector could invariably be found to be amongst the most Tory in any given borough; whilst the retailers and skilled craftsmen were usually amongst the most radical groups. The most volatile group was the unskilled labourers; perhaps the sector most likely to be subject to intense pressure during election campaigns. The merchants, manufacturers and distribution interest remained the most evenly balanced and genuinely split group, fluctuating from constituency to constituency in their support for the Tory candidates. There are swings in the *percentages* of voters of a particular occupational grouping supporting the Tory, radical or Whig cause but despite these internal swings the *ranking* of categories of voters persists in following this general pattern.[26] It does not matter that not all occupational groupings over a wide range of diverse constituencies gave different levels of support to the two parties. What is significant is, that despite the problems in using occupational analysis as a basis for a class or economic model of voting behaviour[27], it is possible to arrive at broad conclusions about occupation and voting on a national level. Voting behaviour is a complex mixture of family, environmental and political factors, so the fact that general patterns emerge out of this morass must be of consequence.

[26] The similarity in the patterns (if not the levels) of party support among occupational groupings seems to run counter to the views expressed by Wald, 'broad claims about the electoral significance of "class divisions" could not be sustained', cited in support of Phillips' general conclusions about occupation and voting behaviour, *The Great Reform Bill*, p. 269. O'Gorman too downplays the significance of occupation as a factor influencing voting behaviour, 'political, religious and tactical considerations appear to have been uppermost', 'The Electorate before and after 1832', p. 173.

[27] These problems have most clearly been articulated by R S Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth century* (London, 1972), pp. 62–74 in a critique of Vincent's work on Victorian poll books.

Voter participation

Voter participation has recently attracted an increasing amount of attention.[28] It is now recognised that the *proportion* of the electorate to the total (or adult male) population is less important than the number of those *regularly partaking* of their right to vote. The experience of voting is almost as crucial to the operation of a democracy as the right to vote. Thus Speck's oft quoted remark that 'the electoral system was more representative in Anne's reign than it had ever been before, or was to be again until well into Victoria's' appears to miss the point.[29] There is no point in having a high level of representation if voters are either refused the chance to exercise their right to vote by a lack of contests or if turnouts are so miserably low that there appear to be mental or physical obstacles preventing voter participation. Despite the low levels of representation after 1832, as low as 2.2 per cent of the population in Huddersfield for example;[30] both the number of contests and electoral turnout are markedly higher than those in either late Stuart or Hanoverian England.[31]

Whilst 'one of the key characteristics of the unreformed electoral system is the marked absence of contests'[32] in the West Riding after 1832 it was rare for there *not* to be a contest. Even electors in the pocket boroughs of Ripon and Knaresborough had the novel experience of regular contests throughout the 1830s in contrast to the practice before 1832. (See Tables 3.7 and 3.8) Indeed, Knaresborough

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[28] For example, Clark, *English Society*, p. 17; Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, pp. 32–6; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 182–91; Beales, 'The Electorate before and after 1832: the Right to vote and the opportunity', pp. 139–50 and O'Gorman, 'The Electorate before and after 1832', pp. 171–83.

[29] Speck, *Tory and Whig*, p. 17.

[30] Source: Dod, *Electoral Facts Impartially Stated.*

[31] Obviously both the number of contests and measures of electoral turnout do not give a complete picture of voter participation. Many 'contests' were abandoned before the poll, for example, in order to save costs, see O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 111–12.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

had last undergone a contest at a general election (as opposed to a by-election) in 1784 and Ripon's electoral history was even more repressed, the last contest being in 1715.

Table 3.7 Contested elections in the West Riding, 1826–1831.

	General Election			
Constituency	*1820*	*1826*	*1830*	*1831*
Aldborough	√	√		
Boroughbridge	√	√	√	
Knaresborough				
Pontefract	√	√	√	
Ripon				
Yorkshire			√	

The contrast between Tables 3.7 and 3.8 is stark. In the four general elections before the 1832 Reform Act there were only eight contests (out of a potential twenty) in the West Riding boroughs and only one county contest. Table 3.7 obscures an even worse picture. The two contests in Aldborough in 1820 and 1826 were, in fact, the only two contests between 1715 and 1832; Boroughbridge had only four contests in the same period; only Pontefract was contested regularly (and controversially) throughout the eighteenth century.[33] By comparison, in the four general elections after the passing of the Reform Act, there were only six occasions (out of forty) where constituencies were left uncontested. The reason for this high rate of contested elections is partly to do with the increased expectations of voters after 1832. In Ripon, for example, the influx of ten pound householders, diluting the efficacy of the burgage transfer votes raised

[33] C Bradley, 'The Parliamentary Representation of the Boroughs of Pontefract, Newark and East Retford, 1754–1768', (unpublished MA thesis, University of Manchester, 1953).

hopes — that were initially fulfilled — that the stranglehold of the Robinson/Aislabie family on the constituency could be shattered.[34]

Table 3.8 Contested elections in the West Riding, 1832–1841.

	General Election			
Constituency	*1832*	*1835*	*1837*	*1841*
Bradford	√	√	√	√
Halifax	√	√	√	√
Huddersfield	√	√	√	
Knaresborough	√	√	√	√
Leeds	√	√	√	√
Pontefract		√	√	√
Ripon	√	√		
Sheffield	√	√	√	√
Wakefield		√	√	√
West Riding		√	√	√

These expectations could lead to rival patrons challenging established interests, as in the case of Knaresborough, or groups of voters trying to wrest control of the borough from the hands of long established interests, which happened in Pontefract. In the virgin constituencies, created by the Reform Act, there was also a competitive atmosphere — a jostling between members of the established elites in the towns to become the first MPs for the new boroughs. There had never been any doubt about the status afforded to MPs of large and populous constituencies and boroughs such as Leeds and Sheffield attracted the fortune seekers and the famous endeavouring to represent them in Parliament.[35]

[34] For a full discussion of the effects of the Reform Act upon Ripon, see Chapter IV.

[35] For example, Thomas Babington Macaulay and Michael Sadler were both candidates for Leeds in the 1830s and James Silk Buckingham and David Urquhart stood for Sheffield. See Chapter II for more details.

These factors, coupled with the novelty of participating in the reformed electoral system and the strong sense of duty and privilege attached to the vote meant that uncontested seats stood out, many electors looking for explanations for the lack of a contest. The lack of a contest in Wakefield in 1832 for example, was due to the inability of the Tories to find a suitable candidate in time for the election and attracted much criticism within the town from those who considered that their anticipated right to vote had been denied.[36]

Table 3.9 Selected turnouts in the West Riding, 1832–1841 (adjusted).[37]

	General Election			
Constituency	*1832*	*1835*	*1837*	*1841*
Bradford	–	–	82.0	88.8
Halifax	92.7	96.1	92.1	91.0
Huddersfield	–	–	94.4	–
Leeds	84.4	–	–	91.2
Ripon	96.8	–	–	–
Sheffield	77.7	83.2	67.0	55.2
Wakefield	–	–	81.6	83.8

The methods involved in calculating turnouts become considerably easier after 1832. It is no longer necessary to peruse a large range of fragmented sources such as freemen's rolls, lists of burgesses, directories, canvassing lists and tax records as is the case for the period before the Reform Act.[38] The Act introduced voter

[36] Wakefield Archives, Gaskell MSS. 28 March 1832, letter from Milnes Gaskell esq. To Chairman of his Committee.

[37] The turnout figures have been adjusted to exclude voters who were dead, had moved or whose votes were disallowed since the last revision of the electoral register, where this is known. All figures are taken from extant poll books and may differ slightly from other 'official' sources.

[38] The uncertainty about calculating the number of voters who might be eligible to vote obviously casts doubt upon the accuracy of figures which attempt to give a precise figure for electoral turnout before 1832. It is difficult to assess the precision of turnout figures such as those given by O'Gorman in *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 184–5. I would be wary of attempts to put exact figures on electoral turnout before 1832 preferring to talk of turnouts within certain ranges.

registration for the first time and thus from 1832 to the present day turnout has been measured by looking at the proportion of registered voters who exercised their vote in any election.[39] It was necessary for potential voters to pay a fee of one shilling to have their names entered upon the register and there were painstaking efforts made to ensure the register was complete, accurate and kept up-to-date.[40] The register was revised every year and the publishers of poll books often compiled their documents by taking a copy of the most recent register and then entering the electors' votes as they were cast. Turnout figures are frequently very accurate and the non-voters can be divided up into

Table 3.10 Classification of non-voters in Bradford in 1841.[41]

Reason for not voting	*Number*
dead	23
disallowed	1
rejected	9
removed	68
returning officer	1
none	158
Total electorate	*1397*

those who had died since the last revision of the register; who had moved from the qualifying premises; who had their votes rejected or disallowed; who adopted the post of returning officer or clerk of the poll and thus were ineligible to vote and those who did not vote for

[39] Obviously, this means that any calculations of turnout pre and post the 1832 Reform Act are not measuring like with like. After 1832 only *registered* voters are considered whereas before the Act attempts are made to uncover *all* potential voters.

[40] There was widespread evasion of this fee, see Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 87–8.

[41] Source: *Bradford Poll Book* (Bradford, 1841).

tactical purposes or because they were unable to get to the poll for some reason.

The Bradford turnout in 1841 for example, can be adjusted from 81.4 per cent to 88.8 per cent by allowing for the voters who were prevented from voting for some reason. (See Table 3.10) Attention can then be concentrated on the true abstainers.

As can be seen from Table 3.9 turnouts remained phenomenally high during the 1830s. Turnouts of ninety per cent or above were common and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that voters were determined to participate in the electoral process following the impetus given them by the reform of the electoral system. Wide variations in turnout from election to election; from constituency to constituency and from area to area within a constituency are common.[42] There is no correlation between turnout and size or type of constituency. The larger cities may appear to have slightly lower turnouts than the medium-sized constituencies of Halifax and Huddersfield (though interestingly not Wakefield[43]) but often the turnouts of Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford were diminished by the considerably lower turnouts of the neighbouring villages and suburbs which made up their parliamentary constituency. Thus, looking again at the Bradford election of 1841, the turnout for the urban conurbation of Bradford itself was over ninety per cent. The overall participation rates for the parliamentary borough were reduced by the inclusion of the outlying weaving villages of Bowling, Manningham and Horton. There is also no evidence that electoral turnouts in the West Riding were affected by an initial curiosity after

[42] This variation in turnout is common to both the unreformed system where turnouts are calculated to range from 21 per cent to 99 per cent (but see my earlier reservations) and to the contemporary situation. In the 1987 election turnouts ranged from 55.4 per cent (Hackney South and Shoreditch) to 84.4 per cent (Brecon and Radnor). O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 186 and D Denver, *Elections and Voting Behaviour in Britain* (London, 1989), p. 116.

[43] This is surprising because the county poll was also held at Wakefield — though not on the same day — and thus it might be expected that there would be a higher level of political awareness in this, the county town of the West Riding.

the excitement surrounding the passage of the Reform Act and that interest began to die down once the novelty had worn off.[44]

In fact the controversy surrounding electoral turnout before and after the 1832 Reform Act has largely concentrated on an exchange of (often disputed) figures and there has been little attempt to delve deeper and to offer explanations for the wide variations in turnout.[45] The ability to determine voters who do not vote because they are physically incapable of doing so (which can range from around two to ten per cent of the registered voters[46]) means that the focus can be turned to those voters who abstain for other, less tangible reasons. There are both *political* and *social* motives for abstention rates in elections. The amount of political interest in the election and the belief that the vote of a single voter will matter should lead to higher turnouts. One way of measuring this is to look at marginality rates.[47] Thus there should be a high correlation between marginal constituencies and electoral participation.

[44] O'Gorman would argue that the experience in the West Riding however, goes against the national trend. Thus he states 'turnout figures for the period 1832–1865 were remarkably low...'. O'Gorman, 'The Electorate before and after 1832', p. 178. This verdict is contrary to that arrived at in his earlier book, though where he contends that after 1832 turnouts were 'spectacular', *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 182.

[45] O'Gorman, for example, only examines the excessive abstention rates among the 'gentry' following the thread of an earlier study by Geoffrey Holmes. The reasons for this abstention he contends is due to 'studied withdrawal' for fear of disrupting social order rather than any 'political indifference'. G Holmes, *The Electorate and the National Will* (Kendal, 1976), pp. 21–2 and O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 187.

[46] For example, the rate is 2.6 per cent in the Bradford election of 1837 and 10.6 per cent in the Leeds election of 1841. *Bradford Poll Book*, (Bradford, 1837) and *Leeds Poll Book* (Leeds, 1841).

[47] The methodology behind this technique is explained in D T Denver and T G Hands, 'Marginality and Turnout in British General Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 4 (1975), pp. 17–35.

Table 3.11 Marginality rates and turnout figures in Halifax in the eighteen-thirties.

Marginality	*Turnout*
99.2 (1832)	96.1 (1835)
97.1 (1835)	92.1 (1837)
96.3 (1837)	91.0 (1841)

The only objective way to measure the marginality of seats is to examine the closeness of the contest immediately *before* the one where turnout is measured. Thus, where there is a strong conviction amongst electors that their vote will make a perceptible difference. Marginality is calculated by taking the winning portion of votes and dividing it by the total number of votes cast. This figure is then subtracted from one hundred to give a marginality rating. The closer to one hundred the rating is, the more marginal the constituency. Therefore, in the Halifax elections surveyed in Table 3.11 above, the fiercely fought contest of 1832 is indicated by a marginality rate of 99.2 per cent and there certainly appears to be a strong connection between high rates of marginality and high turnout figures.

A second political factor affecting voter participation, which is particularly pertinent after 1832 is the high levels of party identification. The polarisation of politics which occurred during the reform crisis of the early 1830s and continued throughout the decade is mirrored by the spectacularly high turnout rates after 1832. The tailing off of turnout which O'Gorman measures after 1841 also coincides with a period where the distinguishing features of the two national political parties become more ambiguous and during a period when there are various high profile transfers across the party divisions.[48] The importance of partisanship upon turnout helps to explain the differing levels of electoral turnout between constituencies in the West Riding

[48] O'Gorman, 'The Electorate before and after 1832', p. 178.

during the eighteen-thirties. A comparison between Sheffield and Halifax, for instance, reveals that whilst Halifax experienced some bitter contests between the Whigs and the Tories during the 1830s culminating in the riots surrounding the 1835 election, where the Tory candidate was victorious by only one vote; Sheffield politics were characterised by the wholesale failure of the Tories even to field a candidate until 1841. Turnouts in Halifax remained fixed in the ninety to one hundred per cent band throughout the period whilst those in Sheffield gradually declined reaching a nadir of 28.8 per cent in 1847.

Whilst political factors appear to have a measurable affect on turnout the significance of social determinants is less distinct. There is some indication that certain titled members of the gentry did not appear at the polls to register their vote. The 1842 contest to elect a new Registrar for the West Riding and which was confined to freeholders of the county possessing property in excess of one hundred pounds value per annum; was not attended by Earl Manvers, The Earls of Scarborough and Sheffield or the Bishop of Ripon; although the Duke of Leeds, Earl Fitzwilliam and the Earls of Dartmouth, Rosslyn and Harewood were present and cast their votes. The former peers also arranged pairs so that their absence did not have a material affect upon the election.[49] There is similarly a very low correlation between an independent social variable such as the percentage of professional men in the electorate and turnout ($r^2 = 0.09$); where it might be expected that the larger the professional sector the higher the rate of participation.

Another angle to the analysis of voter participation is given by determining the size of the electoral pool. It is possible, after 1832, to use electoral registers to determine the size of the electorate, but a

[49] *An Alphabetical list of the nobility, clergy and gentry who balloted at Wakefield on Tuesday, November 22, 1842 for a registrar for the West Riding of the county of York* (Wakefield, 1842).

simple numerical analysis obscures the fact that there were large numbers of voters entered and removed from those registers each year.

The figures from Table 3.12 demonstrate that in the West Riding the turnover of voters ranged from around six to fourteen per cent per year. In the case of Bradford where there was a general election followed by a by-election within one year, there was a loss of seven per cent of the electorate between July and September, 1841.[50] This high turnover and large electoral pool means that the post-Reform West Riding electorate were an ephemeral body of men, difficult to estimate and constantly changing, despite the assistance of the electoral registers.

Table 3.12 The numbers of experienced voters in selected West Riding constituencies.

Constituency	*% experienced voters*
Bradford (1837→1841)	41.9
Bradford (1841→1841 by-election)	93.0
Halifax (1832→1835)	80.1
Halifax (1835→1837)	74.4
Huddersfield (1834→1837)	62.1
Wakefield (1837→1841)	73.1

The more heavily industrialised the electorate, the higher the level of turnover, demonstrating the fluidity of the social structure during this period. Voters could drift on and off the electoral registers causing immense difficulties for party organisation. There is little

[50] In order to calculate exact measures of electoral turnover, a reliable method of nominal record linkage has to be employed. This is because a number of the 'lost voters' could instead have been discarded as part of the linkage process. The method used here was a semi-automated, multiple-pass system. For more information see Appendix II.

difference between this pattern of persistence and that measured in the unreformed period and it appears to have been a consequence of the occupational and economic mobility of the electorate.[51] This was yet another reason why candidates and parties at this time paid considerable attention to non-electors — an unenfranchised man in one election could easily be amongst the voters in the next.

Clarification of voter participation in the West Riding rests on political rather than social explanations. There does not appear to be a novelty factor affecting general elections immediately after the Reform Act, rather levels of participation depended upon levels of political interest and assumptions made by voters about whether or not their vote would make a difference. There is a material difference in voter participation rates after the Reform Act, especially when measured by the number of contested elections; the typical voter in the West Riding appears politically active, well motivated and closely involved in the electoral process.

Persistent partisanship

The 1832 Reform Act was once widely held responsible for accelerating the establishment of a two-party system and increasing levels of partisanship amongst the electorate.[52] However, during the last two decades, political historians have reclaimed party for the eighteenth century. It has been extensively demonstrated that the early eighteenth century was in the throes of a 'rage of party' in the

[51] O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 193–99.

[52] For example N Gash *Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832–1852* (Oxford, 1965) and D Close, 'The Formation of a Two-Party Alignment in the House of Commons between 1832 and 1841', *English Historical Review*, 89 (1969), pp. 257–77. As far as the electorate is concerned, Phillips has concluded that the extent of partisan voting was one of the major effects of the Reform Act, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, p. 300.

parliamentary and electoral sphere.[53] Recently, the period after 1760 has been described as witnessing 'the emergence of the two party system'.[54] At the same time, historians looking at the period after 1832 have begun to cast doubt about the invincible nature of the two-party system in parliament during the 1830s and have suggested that there was a great deal of continuity in the area of party alignment.[55]

Analysis of partisan behaviour amongst the electorate, however, suggests that there was no great era of party dealignment, even if the two party system broke down at a parliamentary level. In the early eighteenth century partisanship was usually over eighty per cent in county constituencies[56] and it was possible to find rates of party voting running at over ninety per cent after 1760.[57] Party loyalty, a desire for consistency, identification with national issues, party organisation and even corrupt influences help to explain this high level of partisanship, even when the national two-party system had decayed.

Partisanship in an age where the norm was for voters to have two votes can be precisely measured. There are three factors which can be used in combination to calculate levels of party support: the levels of split or cross-party voting, where voters expressed a preference for candidates of opposing political parties; the amount of 'unnecessary' plumping where a voter supports only one of a party's two or more

[53] See for example, Holmes *British Politics in the Age of Anne* and Speck, *Tory and Whig.*

[54] F O'Gorman, *The Emergence of the British Two-Party System, 1760–1832* (London, 1982) and *The Rise of Party in England: The Rockingham Whigs, 1760–1782* (London, 1975).

[55] I Newbould, 'The Emergence of a Two-Party System in England from 1832 to 1841', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 5 (1985), pp. 25–32.

[56] W A Speck, A Gray and R Hopkinson, 'A Computer Analysis of Poll Books: a Further Report', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 48 (1975), pp. 64–90.

[57] O'Gorman. There is no overall average given for the period under analysis, rather a number of specific examples. *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 381–3.

Table 3.13 Cross-party voting (as a proportion of total votes cast) in the West Riding.

	General Election			
Constituency	*1832*	*1835*	*1837*	*1841*
Bradford	18.9	–	2.0	3.2
Halifax	–	7.9	1.6	3.5
Knaresborough	11.4	35.4	17.1	7.6
Leeds	3.7	2.7	1.6	1.2
Pontefract	–	–	–	13.5
Ripon	0.3	2.1	–	–
West Riding	–	–	1.5	0.6

available candidates[58]; and the incidence of 'floating voting', where voters change their preferences from one election to another.

Table 3.13 demonstrates that on the first of those factors — cross-party voting — there is a far from uniform picture, across the West Riding constituencies. The average level of partisan voting is 92.9 per cent, but that figure obscures dramatic fluctuations in the level of split voting. The size of the constituency appears not to be a factor — the West Riding with over thirty-five thousand votes recorded in 1837 and over fifty thousand in 1841, had tiny levels of cross-party voting, 99.4 per cent of the votes cast in 1841 were party votes. The smallest constituency in the West Riding, Knaresborough, paints an entirely different picture. In the eighteen-thirties, a third of the electorate were inconsistent in their support for the two main political parties, explaining the dramatic swings of representation in the borough from Liberal to Tory and back again during the decade. Figures vary from constituency to constituency and from general election to general election and can only be explained by local factors. There is little evidence that the Reform Act had any great effect on levels of partisanship or that voters had been driven into two opposite

[58] The term was coined by Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour*, pp. 222–6.

camps by the reform issue and stayed there once the Act became law.[59] The vacillating levels of party support in Bradford, for instance, can be explained by the presence of John Hardy as a candidate between 1832 and 1841. Hardy, described himself variously as a reformer, a liberal and a liberal-conservative, but it is clear that the adoption of the former two titles was a tactical move in a radical borough. Hardy's voting record once in parliament was decidedly conservative and his true colours shone through. In 1832, the relatively high levels of cross-party voting can be explained by the fact that Hardy stood with Lister, ostensibly as a liberal reformer, whilst the Tories in the borough put up George Banks, a Leeds merchant. In fact, Banks turned out to be far more radical than expected and pledged himself to support the Reform Act, civil and religious liberty.[60] The voters of Bradford were thus faced with a difficult choice, with all three candidates supporting similar issues including the Reform Act. The confusion the voters faced is demonstrated by a detailed analysis of the poll: Lister attracted the most plumpers (224), whilst Banks who was standing as the only Tory in a three-cornered contest received one hundred fewer. Of those supporting two candidates, 280 voters backed Lister and Hardy, 146 Lister and Banks and 142 Hardy and Banks. Who is to say that in these circumstances the voters were making intelligent choices based on their perceptions of a candidates' true political orientation rather than on the party label he chose as a descriptor? In 1837 the position was clearer. The Whigs searching for a moderate man to join up with Lister selected a local landowner, William Busfeild. The Tories chose an ambitious, strident young Tory, ironically, the nephew of the liberal candidate, William Busfeild junior and Hardy was left free-floating on the conservative wing. The voters were clearly not confused by the two

[59] Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, p. 300.

[60] D G Wright, 'A Radical Borough: Parliamentary Politics in Bradford, 1832–1841', *Northern History*, 4 (1969), pp. 138–9.

Busfeilds standing for opposing parties[61], there was very little plumping or split voting and they divided largely along party lines, 601 supporting Lister and Busfeild; 377 voting for Hardy and Busfeild junior. The Bradford electorate thus showed themselves to be intelligent and active participants in the electoral campaigns. They paid attention to the statements from the candidates, the information from party organisations and election committees and the candidates' political records, looking beyond party labels. This phenomenon, which can be repeated in elections across the country, makes it difficult to assess true levels of party voting. Local circumstances must always be taken into account. In trying to estimate levels of partisanship there is no way of insuring against the cunning candidate who tactically describes himself as a 'reformer' or a 'liberal' hoping to be swept along on the tide of public opinion. In fact, contra-indications of partisanship may prove to be exactly the opposite and indicate an intense party political awareness amongst the electorate, as was the case in Bradford.

Table 3.14 'Unnecessary' plumping (as a proportion of total votes cast) in three-corned contests in the West Riding.

	General Election			
Constituency	*1832*	*1835*	*1837*	*1841*
Bradford	17.9	27.6	–	–
Halifax	–	1.9	1.5	1.3
Leeds	1.4	1.1	–	–
Pontefract	–	–	7.5	–
Ripon	–	0.3	–	–
Sheffield	–	30.0	–	–
West Riding	–	–	1.1	–

[61] This contrasts with contemporary voters, who in the European elections of 1994 gave over 10,000 votes to a Literal Democrat standing against a Liberal Democrat in the constituency of South Devon.

The second factor used to determine levels of partisanship in parliamentary elections is the amount of 'unnecessary' plumping. Plumping itself — that is, the decision of the voter to use only one of his two available votes — can be a measure of party identification. In a three-cornered contest, the minority party *depends* on getting a large number of his supporters to plump. Unnecessary plumping occurred when voters 'wasted' one of their two votes although there was a candidate available. As with the case of cross-party voting there could be many reasons why a voter decided to plump unnecessarily. He may be acting upon instructions from a patron or social superior who wishes no dilution of support for their candidate; it may be a tactical move encouraged by a particular candidate's electoral committee; or there may be personal factors which attract a person to a candidate but not to his running-mate.

Table 3.15 'Unnecessary' plumping (as a proportion of total votes cast) in four-corned contests in the West Riding.

	General Election			
Constituency	*1832*	*1835*	*1837*	*1841*
Bradford	–	–	2.0	–
Halifax	8.2	–	–	–
Knaresborough	4.8	7.7	–	–
Leeds	–	–	–	1.3
Ripon	0.4	–	–	–
Sheffield	18.3	–	–	–
West Riding	–	–	–	1.0

The incidence of unnecessary plumping in the West Riding during the eighteen-thirties was generally low. Where it rises above five per cent, an examination of the local circumstances usually offers an explanation. A high occurrence of unnecessary plumping usually indicated a confusion about tactics among local election committees or

just a lack of coherent organisation, leaving voters in the dark about what was expected of them. In Sheffield's first two parliamentary elections, for example, first four and then three candidates stood, all representing the same party. No two were yoked together by local committees, leaving all free floating and left to appeal to the voters as individuals. The high incidence of plumping gives an indication of their success and the weakness of party identification in the borough. The most effective candidate was James Silk Buckingham, a celebrated public lecturer, journalist, traveller and popular radical but an outsider to the constituency. He received four hundred votes from plumpers in 1832 and a phenomenal nine hundred and ninety-five (out of 1554) in 1835. Buckingham had, like many other national figures, deemed it important to represent one of the new, populous, industrial constituencies in 1832, despite having no obvious links with the town. He faced strong, local opposition from a prominent Whig, John Parker who was backed by the Duke of Norfolk; and two local radicals, Samuel Bailey, a philosopher and writer and Thomas Asline Ward, the 'popular' candidate. Buckingham, an astute tactician worked hard whilst canvassing to ensure that his supporters would 'plump' for him. When he could not secure a promise of a plumped vote, he made no recommendation about which candidate he favoured out of the other three. Thus, he ensured that in addition to the high number of plumpers he received, his other supporters were spread evenly between the remaining three candidates. His success at manipulating the voters was repeated in 1835. In this election, Ward withdrew leaving Bailey and Buckingham to fight for control of the radical vote. The poll took place over two days. On the first day, Bailey had an unusually high showing, thus Buckingham's supporters redoubled their efforts to convince their voters that a vote for Bailey, or indeed Parker, would scupper the chances of their candidate. On the second day, Buckingham's supporters turned out in their droves to plump for their candidate and

therefore ensured that he was able to defeat Bailey by over one hundred votes.[62]

It is clear that if contests were organised along the normal patterns — either three-cornered where the candidate of one party faced two from the opposing side, or four-cornered where the parties fielded two candidates apiece — unnecessary plumping was rare. However, the weakness of party at a local level where there was no national organisation overseeing operations, is illustrated by the fact that there were several contests in the West Riding during the 1830s where three or even four candidates from the same party, supporting broadly the same programmes, stood as individuals, only succeeding in diluting the party vote overall.

The last factor used in measuring levels of partisanship is the size of the 'floating vote'. The exact interpretation of levels of cross-party transfers of votes is still hotly debated. It was claimed by Speck that the significant minority of voters who transferred their allegiances from one party to another in the period between 1701 and 1715, were reflecting the intense party struggles and were responding to campaigns that individuals were waging based upon party issues.[63] Thus, the 'floating voters' were demonstrating levels of political awareness amongst the electorate.

This view of cross-party transfers has been challenged by those who argue that a large floating vote in fact demonstrated a low incidence of party awareness amongst the electorate. These voters, it has been argued, were the most uninformed sector of the electorate and those most open to patronal influences.[64] By the late eighteenth and

[62] *Sheffield Independent*, 23 January 1835

[63] Speck, Gray and Hopkinson, 'A Computer Analysis of Poll Books: a Further Report'.

[64] See for example, Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour*, p. 21; Clark, *English Society*, p. 18 and N Landau, 'Independence, Deference and Voter Participation: The

early nineteenth century it has been calculated that the size of the 'floating vote' had diminished from the thirteen to twenty-five per cent range noted by Speck. Indeed, O'Gorman has come to the conclusion that 'in early nineteenth century elections, rates of floating voting in excess of ten per cent seem to have been the exception rather than the rule'.[65] In this period, the small amount of cross-party transfers has been used as one of the factors that indicate a high level of partisanship.

Table 3.16 The 'floating vote' in selected West Riding constituencies.

Constituency	*Floating vote (%)*
Bradford (1837→1841)	5.3
Bradford (1841→1841 by-election)	1.6
Halifax (1832→1835)	10.9
Halifax (1835→1837)	1.3
Huddersfield (1834→1837)	22.6
Wakefield (1837→1841)	3.8

The West Riding evidence corroborates the analysis undertaken by O'Gorman. Table 3.16 demonstrates that the size of the floating vote was often as low as one or two per cent. There were, however, startling local exceptions, for example the relatively large numbers of cross-party transfers in Huddersfield between the elections of 1834 and 1837. This is explained by the high attrition rate of the supporters of Captain Wood, a Liberal, who stood in 1834 to Richard Oastler, the Tory candidate in 1837. The voters who supported the leading Whig candidates in each election (Blackburne in 1834 and Ellice in 1837)

Behaviour of the Electorate in Early Eighteenth century Kent', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), pp. 561–83. Speck has countered these criticisms in 'The Electorate in the First Age of Party' in C Jones (ed.), *Britain in the First Age of Party* (London, 1987), pp. 45–62.

[65] O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 380.

remained mostly loyal.[66] The attraction of Richard Oastler, a Tory radical, to a number of erstwhile Liberal electors can be explained, in part, as a protest vote. In the eighteen-thirties Huddersfield struggled against the patronal authority of the Ramsden family. Those who voted for Captain Wood in 1834 were rejecting the Ramsden family's nominee, John Blackburne. In 1837, they could only decide between Oastler or Ellice, Ramsden's candidate. By supporting Oastler, they were as much protesting against the Ramsden influence, as supporting the Tory cause.

As the example above illustrates, if only the size of the floating vote is calculated, a whole dimension of analysis is missed. The complex decision process which determines how the electorate votes cannot be unravelled merely by examining the number of those who change their party preference from election to election. The size of the floating vote must be considered along with the direction of the flow of the vote. Is the transfer of votes mostly one-way (as in the Huddersfield example) or is the size of the floating vote made up of roughly equal numbers of electors transferring their allegiance from Liberal to Tory and *vice versa*? If the former, then it is the attraction of the particular party or candidate that is luring voters away from the alternative. In this case, the floating voters reflect the intensity of party campaigns, the success of party organisation or the appeal of certain candidates. The true waverers are those voters who cannot make-up their mind which party to support; those who vote on impulse; those who lack the interest or information to make an intelligent choice; or, perhaps, who are willing to sell their vote to the highest bidder.

[66] The exact figures are that: 89.4 per cent of those who voted for Blackburne (the Ramsden nominee and a Whig-Liberal) in 1834 voted for Ellice (Ramsden's candidate and a Whig-Liberal) in 1837; 88.7 per cent of those who voted for Sadler (Tory) in 1834 voted for Oastler (Tory) in 1837; but only 33.9 per cent of those who voted for Wood (Liberal) in 1834 also voted for Ellice in 1837.

	1832 = Liberal				*1832= Tory*			*1832 = Split*			
1835	*Liberal*	*Tory*	*Split*	*Non-voter*	*Liberal*	*Tory*	*Split*	*Liberal*	*Tory*	*Split*	*Non-voter*
1837											
Liberal	73	2	3	3	2	2	–	3	–	9	–
Tory	1	5	2	–	–	83	3	–	57	8	–
Split	–	1	2	–	–	3	–	–	2	5	2
Non-voter	4	1	1	1	–	5	2	2	11	2	–

Table 3.17 An election transition matrix for Halifax, 1832–1837 (%).

By constructing an 'election transition matrix' the flow of the vote from election to election can be analysed. (Table 3.17) The example of the Halifax elections between 1832 and 1837 shows that the number of waverers who changed parties regularly between elections was very small indeed, around one or two per cent. Cross-party voting in general was very low but the direction of flow was away from the Liberals towards the Tories. This reflected the prevailing swing in the constituency and so confirms the view that the 'floating voters' were responding to the efforts of the conservatives in Halifax and that 'party' factors were of primary importance. Thus, although the *size* of the floating vote fluctuates then from constituency to constituency it is the *composition* of the cross-party transfers that is material to the analysis.

The summary of these three factors underlines the fact that the partisanship of the electorate after the Reform Act was one of its enduring features. Party awareness was generally high demonstrated by the low levels of cross-party voting and unnecessary plumping. The size of the floating vote is less important but the fact that the majority of cross-party transfers flowed in one direction only underlines the attraction of party to the West Riding electorate in the eighteen-thirties. There were still significant local variations, but these can generally be explained by a detailed examination of the circumstances surrounding the elections involved and was invariably due to conscious, tactical ambiguities on the part of the candidates involved who wished to identify their electoral campaigns with the mood of reform, progress and change that occurred in the aftermath of the 1832 Reform Act.

Towards a model of voting behaviour

At the centre of the enigma that is voting behaviour is the essential puzzle, 'how does the electorate make their choice?'. The arguments presented here demonstrate that it is as difficult to construct a simple model of voting behaviour for the early post-Reform electorate as for voters in any other period. However, there are two major influences affecting voters in this period. One may be termed 'social determinism'; that is, there are certain group interests that impel individuals to vote in a particular manner. Central among these interests is the economic or status group to which the individual belongs — their social class. An awareness of these group interests is reinforced by contact with other members of the group in the family, among social peers and within the community at large.[67] Although it is true that group interests did appear to have an influence on voting behaviour — albeit using an imperfect methodology to identify members of a similar status sector because of the limitations of the source — there are problems with depending on this factor alone to arrive at a model of voting behaviour. The major difficulty is the problem of the intersection and overlap of different group memberships; most individuals belong to a variety of social interest groups and each play a different and imperceptible role when determining how that individual will vote.[68] In a highly mobile society like that of the industrialised West Riding in the eighteen-thirties the membership of these social groups was constantly changing and therefore it was often difficult to establish a dominant group identity. A

[67] The influence of the family and kin relationships upon voting behaviour is notoriously difficult to determine but in the small number of cases where this is possible it can be demonstrated that fathers and sons usually vote in the same way. For example, in the Sheffield elections of 1832 and 1835, 84 and 97 per cent of identifiable kin groups voted in a similar manner.

[68] The problem of the changing public perception of individuals depending upon their particular circumstances has been termed 'presenting the self' in a set of essays by Erving Goffman, The *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Middlesex, 1959) and has been summarised in an historical context by G Morton, 'Presenting the Self: Record Linkage and Referring to Ordinary Historical Persons', *History and Computing*, 6 (1994), pp. 12–20.

further problem is that this model does not adequately explain the reasons for the often large minorities within each interest group that do not conform to the norm.

The second model is also concerned with group behaviour, but is associated with party identification rather than membership of a particular social group. As the arguments above illustrate, there was a strong sense of party identity amongst the electorate in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain even when party in Parliament was relatively weak. This party sentiment is a natural human instinct and manifests itself in a commitment to a particular estate, region or locality or perhaps in loyalty to a newspaper, alehouse or political club.[69] This identification is reinforced by interactions with family and kin, neighbourhood and community and work partners. Election rituals encouraged this impression of inclusion within a particular political party by the use of colours, flags, songs and music — public displays of group identity.[70] Each party would have their favoured eating and drinking places; their own, individual methods of campaigning and of course distinctive policies to reinforce this feeling of group membership. It is clear that the importance of party identification is a long term factor influencing voting behaviour. Party awareness is often built up over generations and can be based upon custom and tradition rather than on any particular social or economic influences. However, it must be noted that party identification has only an abstract effect upon voting behaviour itself. It is an internal, psychological factor which can vary in intensity and be subject to a number of long-term

[69] This group identification stems from the human race's tribal origins and has been noted by anthropologists and behavioural psychologists: 'It is hard to feel a sense of belonging with a tribe of fifty million or more. His answer is to form sub-groups, nearer to his ancient pattern, smaller and more personally known to him — the local club, the teenage gang, the union, the specialist society, the sports association, *the political party*, the college fraternity, the social clique, the protest group and the rest' [my italics]. D Morris, *Manwatching: A Field Guide to Human Behaviour* (London, 1977), pp. 128–9.

[70] *Ibid.*: 'Typical of all these groups is the development of Territorial Signals — badges, costumes, headquarters, banners, slogans, and all the other displays of group identity', p. 129. For a discussion of election ritual, see Chapter II.

influences. The act of voting, in contrast, is an immediate, time specific occurrence and can be affected by short-term — alcohol played an important part in nineteenth century elections, for example — as well as long-term factors. The frequency and partisan nature of election contests obviously played a part in reinforcing this party awareness; but the evidence from the mid-eighteenth century, when election contests were rare and partisan sentiment in parliament was low, demonstrates that elections cannot be the major component determining the strong sense of party evident amongst the population.

Any model of post-Reform Act voting behaviour must rely upon the social determinist and the party identification arguments, with the latter more strongly emphasised.[71] However, these factors are both of long term significance. The quirky, individualistic and impulsive voting decisions defy reasoned explanation or analysis.

[71] These models are loosely based upon surveys of American voting behaviour between 1948 and 1970 which sought to explain voter choice within a strong two-party environment. B Berelson, P Lazarsfeld and R H Pear, *Voting* (Chicago, 1956); P Lazarsfeld, B Berelson and H Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (Columbia, 1968) and A Campbell, P Converse, W Miller and D Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York, 1960).

Chapter IV

Petticoated Patronesses: Women and Electoral Politics in the West Riding

Women and politics in the decade after 1832

The Reform Act in 1832 for the first time in British politics assigned the franchise to 'a male person' thus formalising the removal of women from their, admittedly peripheral, role in the political process. Although they had traditionally been excluded from politics, a few rich and privileged women had been able to use their influence and status to participate in and manipulate political events. The salons of Lady Holland and Lady Blessington and the electioneering exploits of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire in the Westminster election are well known examples of aristocratic women finding a role for themselves in the universally male world of parliamentary politics. The exclusion of women from participating in politics was part of a larger trend in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century which encouraged women back into the domestic sphere. The rise in the standard of living of the middle class meant that there was a growing body of women who were able and who were encouraged to have little to do with work outside the household. There is a vast body of literature which assigns to women their role within the household and seeks to discourage independent thought or intellectual activity. Mrs Sandford, in her guide for women written in 1831 commented that 'there is something unfeminine in independence, it is contrary to nature and thus offends'.[1] Women thus faced legal, economic and cultural obstacles if they wished to enjoy a public role.

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[1] Cited in Bonnie S Anderson and Judith P Zinsser, *A History of their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present,* 2 volumes (London, 1990), volume 2, p. 169.

Both political and feminist historians have been reticent on the political activities of middle class and aristocratic women during the period immediately following the Reform Act.[2] The political historians of the eighteenth century view 1832 as an end point — for the role of women as well as for other political and parliamentary trends.[3] An exception is Linda Colley, who, in her recent study of the eighteenth century nation — *Britons* — devotes a whole chapter to 'Womenpower', glorying in the ability of women to participate in reform movements, pressure groups and political canvassing.[4] She argues that the debate about women's place in society intensified as the eighteenth century progressed because women were becoming more active rather than less so and that therefore there was a need to restrain their activity. It is clear, however, that 1832 which was a liberating event for many middle class men acted as a constraint upon the activities of their wives, sisters and daughters. The public derision of the Duchess of Devonshire who canvassed openly for Fox at Westminster in 1784 has been seen as a turning point. Electioneering and involvement in politics was increasingly a male domain. Women

[2] The major historians of electoral politics in the early nineteenth century say very little about the role of women, ranging from a sentence in O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 93 to a couple of paragraphs in Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*. Historians who have investigated the political activity of upper and middle class women have, in general, concentrated on the period of those who campaigned for women's suffrage later in the nineteenth century. See, for example, P Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865–1914* (Oxford, 1987) who writes of women's 'modest role' in the pressure group politics between 1832 and 1867 (p. 53). Exceptions are P Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics* (Oxford, 1986) and D Thompson, 'Women, work and politics in nineteenth century England: the problem of authority' in Jane Rendall, *Equal or Different* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 57–81.

[3] See, for example, C Hall, 'The sweet delights of home' in M Perrot (ed.), *A History of Private Life : From the Fires of the Revolution to the Great War* (London, 1990), pp. 47–93; Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 46–7. However, despite Vernon's general thesis that politics after 1832 became more exclusive, he cites examples of women's intervention in electoral politics and writes of 'the relative ease with which brave women could transcend their allotted feminine role...', p. 92.

[4] L Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 249–50 and footnote 22, p. 404 where she writes 'the scope of female activity in nineteenth century Britain... seems in general to have been wider than it was in the eighteenth century.'.

were expected to be silent, but supportive as far as politics was concerned.

Historians have established that women lower down the social scale managed, with difficulty — to establish a role for themselves in the protest movements of the early nineteenth century. Catherine Hall's work on women and political unions and Dorothy Thompson's discussion of women and Chartism, however, illustrate that the progressive organisation of popular politics in the early nineteenth century led to working class women as well as their wealthier sisters being pushed to the periphery.[5] The little that has been written on the role of middle and upper class women in politics has also emphasised their secondary, supporting role. Political hostesses continued to play a part in encouraging their husbands careers. However, Patricia Jalland in her study of politicians' wives and daughters argues that before 1883 the only electoral work in which women co-operated was a limited amount of canvassing.[6] Ambitious women could otherwise only try to establish themselves as the 'power behind the throne' and attempt to manoeuvre their male partners into positions of influence. Indeed, the fact that women already had sufficient political rights via their ability to govern their menfolk's opinions was a standard argument used to reject their demands for suffrage later in the nineteenth century. Many male politicians made appeals directly to women at election times for this very purpose, as this Tory election poster, used in the Bradford election of 1837 illustrates:

> Women of England — Ask those over whom you have influence, if as Men, as Fathers, and as brothers, they would send a representative to Parliament to support such a minister [as Lord Melbourne]. Let them vote for what other political party they may, (for I presume not to interfere in

[5] C Hall, 'The tale of Samuel and Jemima: gender and working class culture in nineteenth century England', in H J Kaye and K McClelland (eds), *E P Thompson, Critical Perspectives* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 78–102 and D Thompson, 'Women and nineteenth century radical politics: a lost dimension in the rights and wrongs of women', in J Mitchell and A Oakley (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (London, 1976), pp. 112–38.

[6] Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p. 205.

> mere party politics), but ah! as you would repudiate the foul mouthed slanderers as you would maintain your own fair fame — suffer them not to vote for a Whig![7]

However, this much quoted but largely mythical influence could only benefit women themselves indirectly. It is not until the beginning of the women's suffrage movement in the 1860s that women have received attention as political participants in their own right. In general, the conclusion of historians of the period between 1832 and the 1860s has been that women had little formal role to play in the male world of national and parliamentary politics.

Elizabeth-Sophia Lawrence, Anne Lister and the West Riding

This reticence on the part of historians could mean that 1832 was indeed a watershed and that middle class and aristocratic women retreated back into their parlours preoccupied by domestic concerns. An alternative explanation would be that the lack of evidence means that it is difficult to make a definitive judgement about the role of women in politics before the start of the organised suffragette movement in the 1860s. Thus it was surprising, on both counts, to find that within just one parliamentary constituency, that of the county of the West Riding of Yorkshire there existed at least two, powerful and ambitious female electoral patrons — Miss Elizabeth Sophia Lawrence of Studley Royal near Ripon and Miss Anne Lister of Shibden Hall, near Halifax.

There were similarities in their circumstances. They were both single women of independent means. Martha Vicinus has written cogently about the independent single woman's struggle to find a niche within society in the later nineteenth century, however she too argues that before 1850 women could only fantasise about achieving a 'public

[7] Bradford Archives, 51 D79/1/71: To the Women of Great Britain 1837.

— therefore male — role at mid-century.[8] She also concludes that women were most successful, in the later part of the century, in spheres where their 'caring', so-called 'feminine' role would be appreciated, for instance in education, nursing, charity work and social reform and least effective in their attempts to participate in politics, law or the military.[9] It is clearly of importance for their political activities, then, that Elizabeth Lawrence and Anne Lister were able to retain their independent status. Their position was not identified by their association with male relations. In the eighteen-thirties the former lived alone at Studley Royal following the death of her sister in 1807 and the latter shared the running of the Shibden Hall estate with her aunt, before assuming direct control in 1836. This was clearly an unusual situation. From Florence Nightingale's despairing novel *Cassandra* via W R Greg's article 'Why are women redundant' to Patricia Jalland's 'dutiful daughters and desperate rebels'; observers have emphasised the unhappy and impotent position of single women during this period.[10] Yet, both women could have merely handed over the responsibility for the management of their estates and the associated political interests to their male administrators and agents; but both chose to take an active role in either maintaining or establishing an electoral interest. The techniques which they employed to do this will be discussed below.

Apart from their single and independent status, the two women were of varying backgrounds and experiences. Elizabeth Lawrence was born into one of the leading families of the West Riding — the Aislabies.[11] The Studley Royal estate had been in the family since the

[8] M Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850–1920* (London, 1985), p. 2.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 285. See also Anderson and Zinsser, *A History of their Own*, volume 2, p. 169.

[10] The two former are cited in Vicinus, *Independent Women*, pp. 2–3 and the latter is a chapter title in Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics.*

[11] For further information on the Lawrence-Aislabie family of Studley Royal see Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 221; Thorne (ed.), *History of Parliament*, volume 1, p. 458; *The Ripon Millenary Record* (Ripon, 1892), pp. 163–5.

mid seventeenth century, incorporating the ruins of Fountains Abbey in 1768. In addition, the assets of the estate included the proprietary, two member borough of Ripon and members of the family or its nominees had been returned for the constituency, without contest, for the whole of the eighteenth century. Before 1832, the franchise in the borough was based on the holders of burgage plots. In the early nineteenth century Elizabeth Lawrence controlled or owned one hundred and eight of these out of a total of one hundred and forty-six and had property in Ripon with an annual value of over four thousand pounds.[12] The family were very active in the political world of Westminster. Elizabeth's great-grandfather, John Aislabie, had been chancellor of the exchequer from 1718 until 1721 during the notorious South Sea scheme and her father, William Lawrence, had been active in national, Tory politics and represented Ripon for six parliaments.[13] The co-heiresses of the estate had been Elizabeth's mother Anna-Sophia Lawrence and her aunt, Elizabeth Allanson. The deaths of her mother in 1802 and her aunt in 1807 and the fact that there were no other surviving children led to Miss Elizabeth Lawrence becoming the sole owner of the Studley estate. She never married, although there were veiled hints of an unsuccessful liaison with a close relation, Frederick Robinson, later the Earl of Ripon and the member for Ripon for twenty years. She left her estate to her cousin, Earl de Grey for his lifetime and on his death it reverted to Robinson.[14] What is clear, is that she inherited her family's devotion to politics and to the maintenance of the proprietary interest in Ripon. As has been frequently demonstrated, even the strongest family interest could be negated within a generation, if it was neglected.[15] In Ripon, even with the passage of the Great Reform Act in 1832 and the change in its franchise, the Aislabie family were able to

[12] Leeds Archives, Vyner MSS, VR/5645 and C37/6.

[13] The political history of the borough of Ripon is contained in the various volumes of the *History of Parliament* and Bean, *Parliamentary Representation.*

[14] The suspected liaison is revealed by Goderich. See, for example, A Denholm, *Lord Ripon, 1827–1909, a Political Biography* (London, 1982), p. 2.

[15] See, for instance, O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 34–8.

pass on intact their interest in the borough. The fact that the borough had been managed by women for over 40 years did not affect its fortunes.

In contrast, Anne Lister had little familial connection with local or national politics.[16] Her immediate family had been based in Lincolnshire for much of her childhood and she had lived permanently in Halifax since 1822. In 1826, her uncle left her the Shibden Hall estate with a life interest for his unmarried sister, also named Ann, and this provided the basis for her forays into local politics. It is clear that this inheritance gave Anne Lister a considerable step up the social ladder. Despite her aristocratic pretensions, there is no disguising the fact that she came from middle class stock. Her legacy gave her the opportunity to enter the ranks of the 'squirearchy' — those members of rural society who hovered uncomfortably on the boundaries of the lesser aristocracy and the upper middle classes — but it is evident that she had even higher aspirations.[17] There is no evidence that any of the Listers were active in local county politics in the early eighteenth century. However, Anne, from an early age had shown an active interest in politics and she remained an active and passionate Tory all her life. Ironically, in view of her later activities, this led her to write in opposition to women's involvement in politics when, in 1819, she received a copy of the *Manchester Observer* containing an article in favour of the rights of women:

> 'Rights of Women' is a curious list of authorities in support of the rights of women to take part in these reform meetings; to vote for representatives in the House of Commons, and, in short to be in every sense of the word

[16] For more information on Anne Lister, see H Whitbread (ed.), *I Know My Own Heart, The Diaries of Anne Lister 1791–1840* (London, 1988); M Green (ed.), *Miss Lister of Shibden Hall: Selected Letters, 1800–1840* (Lewes, 1992); J Liddington, 'Anne Lister of Shibden Hall, Halifax (1791–1840): Her diaries and the historians', *History Workshop*, 19 (1994), pp. 45–77.

[17] Her ambitions and snobbery are apparent throughout much of her diaries; see, for example, Whitbread, *I Know My Own Heart.*

> members of the body politic. What will not these demagogues advance, careless what absurdity or sin they commit!...[18]

Shortly after her succession to the Shibden Hall estate, the 1832 Reform Act provided Halifax with two MPs.[19] The borough was not noticeably corrupt or subject to influence, although it is apparent that the local Whig-Liberals and Tories were desperately trying to come to some compromise that would allow them to return one member each, and thus stave off the danger of a radical being elected.[20] The Tories, however, had to struggle through much of the 1830s, both in Halifax and in the county constituency of the West Riding, within the boundaries of which lay much of the property owned by the Shibden Hall estate.[21] Thus, Anne Lister, unlike Elizabeth Lawrence was attempting to establish an electoral interest from scratch rather than maintaining an existing arrangement. Although, she would never have been in a position comparable to that of Elizabeth Lawrence, she harboured hopes that she could influence the selection of the Tory candidate to fight the Halifax constituency and that she could secure the control of maybe fifty voters. This extract from her diary written in August 1837 shortly after a failed attempt by the Tory candidate to retain his seat illustrates her resolution to establish a substantial electoral interest within the town of Halifax:

> Told Hainsworth to get me two tenants for my two fields — two voters. Ann and I were determined to have voters. We would not rest till we had

[18] Lister MSS, Anne Lister diaries, SH:7/ML/E/3, 6 December 1819.

[19] For more about the political history of Halifax see, Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*; Jowitt, 'Parliamentary Politics in Halifax'; and J A Jowitt, 'A Crossroads in Halifax Politics: Election of 1847', *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society*, (1973), pp. 21–36.

[20] Charles Wood, later Viscount Halifax, established his position within the Whig-Liberal establishment in the town and remained MP from 1832 until 1865. In the face of this, apparently, impenetrable influence, the Tories hoped to come to an understanding with the Wood camp to exclude the possibility of a radical securing the second Halifax seat. For further discussion see Chapter VI. For an alternative explanation see Jowitt, 'A Crossroads in Halifax Politics', p. 21.

[21] F M L Thompson, 'Whigs and Liberals in the West Riding 1830–1850', *English Historical Review*, 74 (1959), 214–39.

about 50. Hainsworth much pleased entering upon a long recital of our praises at the Conservative Association now consisting of 600 members.[22]

Although, her ambitions were never realised, she, nevertheless, was tireless in her search for Tory voters and approached the task of creating an interest in a practical and business-like manner.

Techniques of control

The methods that Elizabeth Lawrence and Anne Lister used to maintain and to establish their electoral interests cast light on the practices of political patrons in general. Anne Lister's experience is invaluable because of the lack of evidence on the political power of the rural squirearchy.[23] Moreover, an examination of their activities gives a unique insight into the influence that women with property could have upon the electoral process after 1832.

Many of the procedures that the two women used to influence the voters in their respective constituencies are not unfamiliar to historians of electoral politics and had almost been developed into a *modus operandi* for successful political patrons during the eighteenth century.[24] Elizabeth Lawrence, for example, followed the practices of other large borough proprietors by acting as a benefactor to the town of Ripon. For example, she paid for the restoration of the ruins of Fountains Abbey in 1822; paid a yearly allowance to poor widows and orphans and supported the 'erection and endowment of churches and chapels, the establishment of parochial schools, the academical or clerical education of humble but meritorious students, or by the many

[22] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/E/25, Anne Lister's diaries. 9 Aug. 1837.

[23] It is notoriously difficult to find evidence of the electoral operations of the lesser gentry and minor landowners in this period, see O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 27–55 and Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 342–72 for further information.

[24] See, for instance, J Golby, 'A Great Electioneer and his motives', *Historical Journal*, 8 (1965), 201–18.

other means that were unceasingly submitted to her consideration.'[25] She therefore acted as the major welfare provider for the borough and its surrounding area. This maternalistic benevolence was essential to maintain her popularity and to avoid the likelihood of expensive contests at election time. In addition, she supervised the civic politics of Ripon. She was asked for opinions and could influence the selection of mayors, aldermen and common councillors and thus the Studley estate effectively controlled Ripon's local and parliamentary politics.[26] A close watch was kept on the occupation of burgage properties and the Aislabie family slowly increased the number under its control throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, buying up properties as they came onto the market.[27] The burgage properties were usually rented out on condition that the tenants transfer their votes, usually to those men who farmed the Studley Royal estate land surrounding Ripon: 'the sleek and jolly farmers of Kirkby Malzeard, Fleetham and Kirkby Fleetham'.[28]

During parliamentary elections themselves, even where there was no contest, Elizabeth Lawrence paid for the inns and public houses to open all day supplying free beef, bread, beer and tobacco. Wine and spirits were only allowed for members of election committees, that is those actively participating in the canvassing of supporters, thus there were a large number of 'committee rooms' which were created on the day of the election.[29] The necessity of avoiding contests at all costs can

[25] *Ripon Millenary Record*, p. 164.

[26] A copy book of her correspondence, dating from 1807 gives a number of examples where she was asked to confirm the appointment of civic officers, Vyner MSS, VR/5574.

[27] Elizabeth Lawrence herself continued this practice and increased the number of burgages held by the Studley estate from around eighty to one hundred and eight after her fathers death in 1798. Vyner MSS, VR/5593, Memoranda relating to burgages in Ripon.

[28] Staveley MSS, DD115/26, Liberal campaign poster. An 1812 survey of the holders of burgage transfer votes shows that fifty per cent were yeomen farmers from Miss Lawrence's estates at Dallow Gill, Sutton Conyers and Kirkby Fleetham.

[29] *Ripon Millenary Record*, p. 139.

be illustrated by the differing expenses of the 1774 and 1832 election, the latter being contested by the Whigs. The total expenditure in 1774 was £123 14*s.* 9*d.* whilst in 1832 the expenses of the Whigs alone amounted to over three thousand pounds.[30] Anne Lister also contributed to election expenses, her donation to the Conservative election committee in Halifax in 1837 amounted to six hundred pounds.[31]

As a landowner wishing to establish her position as a minor electoral patron, Anne Lister was prepared to undertake the more mundane election work of canvassing her tenants directly. Not for her was the 'informal lobbying' of Davidoff and Hall's middle class ladies at election time.[32] In the 1832 election she responded to notes from the Conservative election committee, and sent letters to particular tenants directing them to vote for the Tory candidate but by 1835 she toured her estate during the run-up to elections ensuring that her tenants voted in support of the Tory candidate.[33] Anne Lister realised during the 1835 election campaign that in order to build up her electoral influence she would have to increase the number of voters she could deliver to the Tory candidate in forthcoming elections as the Halifax and West Riding franchises were based on property values rather than burgages as was the case in Ripon:

> told AG I did not want anyone to change his vote against his conscience for me, but I had made up my mind to take none but blue tenants so long as there remained people of this way of thinking; and when there were none I must try to change myself....[34]

[30] Vyner MSS, VR/5645, Expense account of election, 1774 and Staveley MSS, DD115/26.

[31] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/E/25, Anne Lister's diaries. 8 June 1839.

[32] L Davidoff and C Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London, 1987), p. 448. Other examples, they cite, describing the role of middle class women in politics include the 'co-operative sewing' of an embroidered screen to congratulate a successful candidate; arranging flowers to 'bedeck the hustings' and observing the chairing of candidates from afar in a chivalric tableau.

[33] For example, Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/E/15, Anne Lister's diaries. 26 July 1832 and SH:7/ML/E/25, 5 January 1835.

[34] *Ibid.*, 5 January 1835.

Thus, as properties from the Shibden estate came to the end of leases Anne Lister began to fill them with tenants who supported her political persuasion. An example is the mortgaging and subsequent letting of the Northgate Hotel in Halifax in 1835. This was an opportune moment to increase the number of Tory votes she could control and this factor was clearly more important than the level of rental income that she would receive:

> Greenwood came at 10½... he would give me for Northgate House and land £100 a year — I said could he not give me £110 per annum — No! he would give me £100 but if I could make more of it, begg'd I would do so — if he had it he would give it up or a part of it whenever I wanted it — he would secure 3 blue votes in letting his own property and his own vote and one we might make of his foreman = 5 and Dinninton Hopwood Lane tenant and John Bottomley = 7 good blue votes[35]

The selection of suitable candidates for their respective constituencies was vitally important to the two women, although Anne Lister could only hope to influence the choice of candidate by suggesting names to the Conservative election committee whilst Elizabeth Lawrence had the right to select or reject candidates as she saw fit. For example in June 1832, Anne Lister visited the head of the selection committee to try and persuade him to consider her idea for a candidate for Halifax:

> Called at Mr Parker's. Just said I hoped Stocks would not be our MP and begged Mr Parker not to pledge himself to anyone but wait a little. I thought I could find a better MP than Stocks... Asked who else had been thought of. Three had been named; Mr Fawkes, Mr Protheroe and he forgot the third (a Lascelles). I said I thought I could name one better than any of them — of a family originally from Halifax, the name familiar to us all, particularly at Shibden... Lord Pollington.[36]

Although, unsuccessful in her attempt to get her favoured candidate selected, Anne persisted and in 1839 persuaded the committee to approach Lord Pollington, suggesting that they asked him for a contribution to election costs, this was done and apparently

[35] *Ibid.*, 22 January 1835.

[36] *Ibid.*, 10 June 1832.

Pollington promised to give four hundred pounds towards expenses.[37] Elizabeth Lawrence was in the more fortunate position of being able to select Conservative candidates herself. Much of the time, she was persuaded to accept candidates suggested by the Tory hierarchy at Westminster, usually professional, career politicians and often destined for high office such as Robinson who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1823 and first Lord of the Treasury for a few months following Canning's death in 1827 and Shadwell who was made Vice-Chancellor of England in 1827.[38] However, the Tory party could not presume automatically to propose candidates for the constituency and even Robinson had to justify, because of her staunch Anglican beliefs, his support for Catholic relief in 1812, in order to retain his seat.[39] All applications to fill the seats at Ripon were made directly to her and she retained the ultimate power of veto.[40]

Thus both Elizabeth Lawrence and Anne Lister used familiar electioneering techniques to cultivate their interests in Ripon, Halifax and the West Riding including the use of money, canvassing and persuasion of tenants and the maintenance of favourable public relations by the provision of welfare, goods and services to the locality. However, both were also involved in the more disreputable side of electioneering and appeared to have no qualms about threatening and carrying out evictions of tenants who refused to co-operate with their activities.

The Ripon election of 1832 was particularly notorious, being the first contest under the new franchise, which increased the electorate

[37] *Ibid.*, 8 and 25 June 1839.

[38] Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, pp. 1032–43.

[39] Thorne (ed.), *History of Parliament*, volume 1, p. 458.

[40] Vyner MSS, VR/5574. Copy book of correspondence, 1807. Examples include 26 February 1807, Lady Headley to Miss Lawrence with respect of a seat in Parliament for her son and her answer and 27 April 1807, Mr Robinson to Miss Lawrence respecting his going down to the Ripon election and her answer.

from the one hundred and forty-six burgage holders to three hundred and forty-one on the 1832 register.[41] The election was viewed both locally and nationally as a test of the effectiveness of the new act — could the inclusion of the three hundred householders change the character of the proprietary borough which had remained in one family for over one hundred years? Both pro- and anti-reformers anxiously watched as the contest unfolded. The former wanted an upset, while the latter desired that the implications of the act would not be as revolutionary as had been feared. The campaign was bitter and rancorous with allegations and counter-allegations of corruption and wrong-doing and resulted in the return of the two Liberal candidates. The Liberal candidates made many references to the 'unnatural' influence of Elizabeth Lawrence. A campaign speech by Staveley maintained a careful balance; lauding the domestic and decrying the public roles of women:

> At your request, I now stand before you (ladies, I am sorry to say it) to do away with *petticoat* influence. Men could no longer bear it, that one immense *blue petticoat* should cover the whole town of Ripon and exclude from its inhabitants those bright rays of *light* and *liberty* which are now shining forth in all their glory from one end of the borough to another.
>
> Nothing gives me more gratification and encouragement than to see so many ladies sporting my colours today — and although I have declared myself so hostile to petticoat influence *in public affairs*, it certainly forms an indispensable item in our domestic happiness...[42]

The important role that women played during parliamentary elections was thus tacitly acknowledged by Staveley. He had no wish to alienate such a powerful section of the community. Allegations of illegal, 'feminine' influence went further than Staveley's cautious references in the anonymous Liberal campaign posters:

> Is this not an impious and paltry imposition used, that men with bona fide property and real votes, may be defeated in their assertion of their legal rights and cheated out of the exercise of their elective franchise? And is not all this done, that *a lady* (whom the laws of England disqualify from any

[41] Dod, *Electoral Facts*, p. 263.

[42] Staveley MSS, DD115/26. Campaign speech by Staveley.

> share in the representation of the people) may send her avowed nominees into Parliament...[43]

This is clear evidence, not only of a woman's direct involvement in electoral politics but also of the pique suffered by sections of the electorate who saw female interference as illegal.

The defeat of the Studley Royal nominees, by a mere six votes led to Elizabeth Lawrence taking immediate action. The Tory candidates, two barristers based in London, immediately lodged a petition with the House of Commons contesting the eligibility of thirty-two electors, arguing that 'a colourable majority appeared for the sitting members, whereas Sir Charles Dalbiac and Wm. Markham Esq. had the legal majority, and ought to have been returned'.[44] The petition, however, was doomed to fail when the committee investigating the case refused to allow allegations of violence and intimidation on the part of voters to be admitted. The petitioners succeeded in having one voter, George Snowden, removed from the register but failed with the other cases. Thus the Committee resolved in favour of the sitting .members.[45]

Having failed to overturn the election of the Liberal MPs, Elizabeth Lawrence wasted little time in exacting her revenge and attempted to ensure that the debacle of 1832 would not be repeated. The eleven holders of burgage plots who voted against Dalbiac and Markham were summarily evicted from their property 'even to the poor widow aged 80!'[46] Elizabeth Lawrence signed the eviction orders herself and made them public.[47] There is also evidence that the Studley Royal estate took advantage of the 1832 Act which had extended the constituency boundaries beyond the confines of the town, by creating

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[43] *Ibid.*, Liberal election poster.

[44] A E Cockburn and W Carpenter Rowe, *Cases of Controverted Elections* (London, 1833), p. 292.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

[46] *Leeds Mercury*, 10 January 1835.

[47] Staveley MSS, DD115/26. Collection of eviction notices.

plots worth ten pounds per annum on the estate lands which encircled the town. Two farmers who would not comply with this practice were ejected.[48] The electorate that came to the poll in January 1835 was, then, substantially altered from that which returned the reforming candidates in 1832 as was reported by a local Liberal in the *Leeds Mercury*:

> there are 25 transferees who are only purchased voters — about as many cowhouse and potato garden voters; the whole of the aldermen, who are generally as much under the influence of the house of Studley as the transferees themselves; and about two-thirds of the common councilmen among their [the Conservative candidates] supporters; and the rest are all got through the influence of the surrounding tory gentry.[49]

The process by which these 'cowhouse and potato garden voters' were created was described by another correspondent to the *Leeds Mercury*:

> ... how the heart sickens when he views this extensive pasture staked out in 42 divisions, and becomes acquainted with the fact that the owner of this fair mansion of Studley has done this to rob us of our birthright. Yet Mrs. [sic] Lawrence' agents call these portions of land allotments, which, with a small field or two, and a cottage are let principally to poor men and it is at their peril that they vote for any candidate but those appointed by the authority of Mrs. Lawrence...[50]

The effect of these changes increased the electorate by twelve per cent between 1832 and 1835, mostly, the Liberals claimed, by the sub-division of plots of land belonging to the Studley Royal estate into ten pound units, each filled with a loyal tenant of Elizabeth Lawrence. Although, one of the sitting Liberal members contested the 1835 election, he was roundly defeated by hundred votes. His analysis of those who supported the leading Tory candidate is as follows:

> Of the 235 voters for Mr. Pemberton, there were 170 10*l.* householders, good votes, 59 of whom were tenants of Miss Lawrence; 21 ditto, divided qualifications — of these 17 were tenants of the same; 20 cow-house votes

[48] *Ibid.*, newspaper cutting.

[49] A 'Liberal', *Leeds Mercury*, 17 January 1835.

[50] A letter from Mr John Durham, *Leeds Mercury*, 31st January, 1835.

> — 11 of these tenants of the same... 24 burgage holders under the Studley estate — faggot votes every one...[51]

The Liberals' campaign could not compete against the Studley interest once it had been mobilised to its full extent and Staveley was soundly defeated by hundred and ten votes. Ripon was not contested again in Elizabeth's lifetime.

Anne Lister was also not adverse to threatening eviction to ensure her tenants complied with her wishes. Although she employed a steward, she undertook the 'persuasion' of her tenants herself, as this passage concerning her conversion of a tenant from a Liberal to a Tory illustrates:

> I met Sowden — I asked him for his vote — no! he would not vote at all — I said I was sorry for it — he said he had friends on both sides and none but independent men should vote — then said I, there would not be as many hundreds of voters as there are thousands. Better said I to take one side — those who take neither made no friends and in case of anything happening had nobody to talk to — it was as if they set themselves on a hill to be pelted by all parties — S__ said that in some counties the tenants talk of turning off the landlords instead of the landlords turning off the tenants. Well! said I, then we must make as good a fight as we can... S__ asked if I should not want a good deal of rough stuff for my job at Mytholm, meaning coal water wheel — Yes! said I but I must think of my friends for that and wished S__ good day. W K told me S__ was an arrant yellow — he and Eastwood of Brighouse 2 of the yellowest in the township...
>
> ... Had Mr Sowden. Sorry he had offended — hoped I should look over it — would have given me his vote but had been first canvassed by the yellows and had promised not to vote at all. Otherwise did not care *6d.* how he voted. Then, said I, will you vote with me? I will not call upon you unless pressed, but may I count upon your vote? Yes. Very well, said I, then I will think no more of what has passed — meaning he might keep the farm. Said I would not take a new tenant who would not give me his vote but I had not meant to send away an old one. However, I must now consider S__ as a new tenant and ask his vote. He promised to give it me. I said dinner was waiting, ordered him beer and came away.[52]

Anne Lister also took a robust approach to the local press and her correspondence includes a letter of apology from the editor of the *Halifax Guardian*, James Keating, whom she had threatened to

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[51] Staveley MSS, DD115/26. Account of the election by Staveley.

[52] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/E/25, Anne Lister's diaries. 7 May and 2 September 1835.

horsewhip, for an anti-Tory insertion copied from the *York Chronicle.*[53] Despite her earlier ideas about the role of women, Anne had developed a passion for electoral politics and was prepared to engage in public debate, even when in danger of being physically assaulted. The 1835 election in Halifax saw the Tory candidate victorious by only one vote. The resulting wave of disappointment, especially among the unenfranchised of the town led to a riot resulting in thousands of pounds worth of damage and several serious injuries. The next day, Anne walked down into Halifax and was confronted by a mob of women and boys,

> ... they asked if I was yellow... they looked capable of pelting me. "Nay!" said I, "I'm black — I'm in mourning for the all the damage they have done" — that seemed to amuse them and I walked quietly and quickly passed.[54]

The light thus far shed upon the activities of the two women in the exercising of their political patronage, demonstrates that it was possible for females to penetrate and master this supposedly closed male world. As long as they had money, property and political ambition women could succeed as well as any man. Neither seems to have been constrained by society's conventions, which implied that women should retreat from the public arena. Elizabeth Lawrence appears to have distanced herself from the sharp end of politics, more by her wealth than her gender. In fact, it is difficult to imagine Earl Fitzwilliam confronting his recalcitrant tenants in the manner in which Anne Lister bravely faced hers. Those further up the social scale have always been able to rely on agents to carry out their dirty work. However, they had to be prepared to take responsibility for those underlings' actions. Although both women had to adopt the male customs and practices of electioneering and in Anne Lister's case almost become an 'honorary man', they did bring peculiarly feminine

[53] *Ibid.*, Letter 832, 19 January 1835, copy of a letter from Mr James Keating, editor of the *Halifax Guardian*, to Mr Robert Parker, solicitor. The letter apologises for the insertion 'because it offended the family at Shibden Hall'.

[54] *Ibid.*, SH:7/ML/E/25, Anne Lister's diaries, 8 January 1835.

practices to their political activities, declaring their separation from, as well as partaking as equals in the male political domain.[55]

One method they used was to employ extensive female networks of friends and kinsfolk to support them at an emotional, intellectual and political level; to reinforce their opinions, encourage them in their actions and help them develop strategies for the pursuance of their political ambitions.[56] To some extent, these casual circles of friends and relations replaced the formal political institutions which men used to increase their influence — political committees, clubs, pressure groups, trades unions and so on. The full extent and successful operation of Anne Lister's support networks can be pieced together because of the survival of her letters and diaries demonstrating how her voice could reach local, metropolitan, national and international arenas. Much has been written about her lesbianism and it is undoubtedly the case that many of her close friends and partners were indispensable to the furtherance of her political ambitions.[57] Her network of 'political contacts' began in 1820, when she met Sibbella Maclean at York.[58] In 1829 Anne accompanied Sibella's niece, Vere Hobart to Paris. Later the same year Vere and Anne were joined on a trip to Belgium by Lady Louisa Stuart, Vere's grandmother. The Stuart family included among its various branches the descendants of Earl Bute, based in Scotland; the Stuart Wortleys based at Wharncliffe Hall, Wortley near Sheffield, in the West Riding and the Saviles headed by the Earl of Mexborough,

[55] '... there were two possible routes for women excluded from the world of authority and activity, in the claiming of equality or the assertion of difference.' Rendall, *Equal or Different*, p. 2.

[56] The use of 'female support networks' in the lives of Victorian women has been extensively demonstrated. See, for example, P Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850–1900* (London, 1987), pp. 15–23; B Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 13–15 and Rendall, *Equal or Different*, pp. 8, 13–14.

[57] Helena Whitbread was the first modern writer to crack the code in Anne Lister's diaries which detailed her relationships and desires in *I Know My Own Heart*. For an examination of the debate concerning this issue see Liddington, 'Anne Lister of Shibden Hall', especially p. 72.

[58] Naturally, Anne had further contacts with whom she discussed politics, but here I have listed only those most directly useful to her political ambitions.

whose seat again was in the West Riding of Yorkshire. In Paris, Anne was introduced to Lady Stuart's son, Lord Stuart de Rothesay who was the ambassador and in 1830 travelled with Lady Stuart de Rothesay and her children to the Pyrenees. In 1834 she began a lasting relationship with Ann Walker, of Lightcliffe, near Halifax and for the remainder of her life they ran the Shibden and Lightcliffe estates jointly, increasing the number of votes they could control.

The operation of this network was largely by means of correspondence because of the distances involved. However, the Stuarts made at least one visit to Shibden Hall and Anne regularly travelled to London and the continent. At election times, especially letters went back and forth between the Stuart and Lister households. The Stuarts' cousins, John and James Stuart Wortley, the sons of Lord Wharncliffe, were candidates for the West Riding and for Halifax respectively throughout the eighteen-thirties. The London Stuarts were therefore delighted to have regular news of the political fortunes of their cousins. For example, in 1832 Anne received regular letters from Lady Stuart de Rothesay, Lady Louisa Stuart and Vere Hobart in the months leading up to the election, urging her to support James in his candidature at Halifax, including one from Lady Louisa Stuart:

> I wrote to my nephew James Wortley the other day and said I had pleasure in hearing he was likely to succeed in Halifax. I was sure you wished him well — indeed, dear Miss Lister I feel I hardly need to ask of you to interest yourself in him — which I now do particularly as he seemed ignorant of your good wishes for him...[59]

In return, Anne confided in the Stuarts her predictions for the outcome of the Stuart Wortleys' campaigns and supplied them with up-to-date local information. This was especially welcome in the 1835 election, when James Stuart Wortley won one of the Halifax seats by only one vote. Many of the London papers had reported that he had

[59] Lister MSS, Letter 629. 16 November 1832, Lady Louisa Stuart to Anne Lister.

lost.[60] In the letters from Anne to the Stuarts it is possible to trace her growing confidence and wish for involvement in the electoral politics of the town. In these accounts of her feelings after the Tory defeat in 1832 and victory in 1835, she writes of her disillusionment with the predictions of the Tory committee and her wish that the Conservatives were more organised:

> I never was so astonished and disappointed in my life; I have not yet got over it [the election] cannot think of it with common patience... well may you say I was sanguine — I was guided by the positive assurances of those who ought to have been well informed and who were themselves deceived at the last moment — there must have been foul play somewhere or other...
>
> ...I am not in the least in despair, tho' some things have turned out neither as we expected nore desined [sic] — the Whigs and radicals have inflicted a scrutiny on us here, but we hope all will yet be well, and that our member will not be unseated. Threats run high; but surely we shall have nothing worse than two thousand pounds to pay, of which Lord Wharncliffe will pay half... I shall try... to make a few votes — the Whigs and radicals will have their friends act upon the exclusive dealing system; and we have no alternative...[61]

The Stuarts had a further interest in the West Riding, in the fortunes of their cousin, the Earl of Mexborough who had an electoral interest in Pontefract. The family's fortunes suffered throughout the 1830s with a challenge from Viscount Galway who also owned property in the town and the candidature of John Gully and ex-prize fighter and popular hero in the town. Mexborough's son was Lord Pollington, whom Anne was keen to have as a candidate at Halifax, thus again the mutual interest of the correspondents was encouraged and Anne Lister kept the Stuart's informed of Pollington's progress.[62]

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[60] 'I put in my thanks for your letter put in at the close of the poll, which being later and different from the newspapers account of the election was particularly welcome...'. Lister MSS, Letter 825. 11 January 1835, Lady Vere Cameron, Whitehall.

[61] *Ibid.*, Letter 653. 17 January 1833, draft from Anne Lister, Shibden Hall to Lady Stuart and Letter 839. 5 March 1835, Anne Lister, Shibden Hall to Lady Stuart de Rothesay.

[62] See Chapter VI, for a discussion of Pollington and Pontefract.

Elizabeth Lawrence also appeared to have a network of family and friends to help her in the exercising of her political patronage. A copy book of her letters that survives from 1807, includes letters to and from her aunt, Mrs Elizabeth Allanson, with reference to the Ripon election and one from Lady Headley, a relation, respecting a seat in Parliament for her son.[63] In Ripon and Halifax, therefore, the female members of influential families appear to have had an active, if supportive, role in the conduct of elections, the promotion of candidates from their immediate family and discussions of strategies. The picture derived from the Lister and Lawrence correspondence does not tally with the impression given by contemporary commentators of women retreating from the public sphere, concerning themselves with domestic issues, but rather, implies that the women concerned were interested in the political landscape and kept themselves up-to-date with events concerning them and their families. In between election times Anne Lister's correspondence contains many references to political events including debates about the Reform Act; the growing power of unions; the Whig moves to oppose the election of a Speaker to the House of Commons in 1835; discussions about the fate of the established church and factory reform.

Among other methods employed by Anne Lister, which convey the techniques which she used as a woman to increase her electoral influence was to appeal to the wives and mothers of her tenants and associates, in order that they would then persuade their husbands and sons.[64] She used every occasion possible, even casual meetings, to increase the number of Tory votes:

[63] Vyner MSS, VR/5574, Copy book of correspondence.

[64] Examples of Anne Lister's use of family pressure include this example where, she attempts to intimidate a tenant's wife: 'off immediately to G N___'s he gone to Southowram — talked some time to his wife — she said he should vote — I replied that I understood his farm to be at £50 and he had paid it once — it was well worth it — I had shown favour to him but did not intend losing a vote...' Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/E/25, Anne Lister's diaries. 3 August 1835.

> Had Mrs Hopkin some time about the Sunday School... Hopkin has a vote for the county — his wife will ask him for it and thinks he will give it me for the Blues...[65]

Sometimes, however, these attempts to influence men via their female relations backfired upon Anne Lister. In these circumstances, she would meet a woman as determined as herself — but of the opposite party:

> Off with A [Ann Walker, her companion] at 7.50 to her tenants... saw George — he would not vote at all — a simple looking young man but said it in a way that showed he would not be persuaded by A — his mother evidently for his not giving A his vote — said what could they do — they had the trade to consider — A said not much but that she thought her tenants ought to vote on her side which would otherwise not be represented at all — the young man looked sullen — I said, "Well! you have refused your landlady the only favour she has ever asked. I hope you will not have an opportunity of refusing her many more favours" — he answered "I hope not" — very well said I when you have a favour to ask what will you expect — I heard no answer and A and I wished good morning. We came away, she determined to quit the people and I quite agreeing she was right...[66]

The views expressed by Ann Walker to her tenant give a woman landowner's response to the complaints of Staveley and the electorate of Elizabeth Lawrence's 'illegal' influence in Ripon. Ann Walker's view is that her tenant should act as her representative because she did not possess the vote and because otherwise the political opinions of this particular landowner would not otherwise be represented. In other words, *female* landowners had a greater right than *male* proprietors to expect their tenants to vote in accordance with their landlady's interests.

Although it is possible that Elizabeth Lawrence and Anne Lister were exceptional and atypical, the insights given from their diaries and correspondence portray women of all ranks and classes displaying a wide interest in public affairs. In the new political climate after the 1832 Reform Act, women were determined to play a part. Despite

[65] *Ibid.*, 2 May 1835.

[66] *Ibid.*, 4 August 1835.

society's restraints, women from the Sunday school mistress to the wife of the ambassador to France, had an interest and participated in local electoral politics.

The political power of women?

The view of historians writing on the period after 1832 has, to date, tallied with George Eliot's verdict on Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, 'Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done.' But women clearly were not politically impotent. They were certainly constrained by the dictates of society and by the lack of any political rights, but were able to develop a strategy to circumvent these barriers. It could be argued that the discovery of three independent political patrons — Anne Lister, her friend Ann Walker and Elizabeth Lawrence — living within a few miles of each other, is coincidental, and that it was only possible for single, wealthy women — and then only exceptional ones — to become involved in politics. However, it has been established that by 1851 there were over thirty thousand middle and upper class unmarried women.[67] The problem of what to do with them vexed the minds of many Victorian social theorists.[68] Single women, however, were not necessarily content to accept their so-called redundancy and it is possible to match the tales of depression, retreat into permanent invalidity or idleness with triumphant examples of women novelists, nurses, educators and philanthropists.[69] In fact, single women were often in positions to achieve more simply because of the

[67] Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 27.

[68] Greg believed the answer was to ship single women over 30 to the white dominions. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[69] *Ibid.* and Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, pp. 253–89.

fact that they were unmarried and not troubled by the demands of husbands and children. It is difficult to imagine that Anne Lister and Elizabeth Lawrence were unique — for the many women left in charge of running family estates, the maintenance or establishment of a political interest was merely an adjunct to their social responsibilities towards the local community. The problem is lack of evidence and this is compounded by the fact that very few single women left any records of their activities. Thus, as with Elizabeth Lawrence, details emerge only by piecing together disparate fragments of information — mostly provided by male protagonists.

It has been claimed that 'in the exercise of patronage, property rather than gender could be a determining characteristic' and this was certainly true to an extent with the electioneering techniques of Anne Lister and Elizabeth Lawrence.[70] At times, there is little difference between their methods and those of their male counterparts. However, even in the supposedly 'gender-neutral' sphere of electoral politics, it is possible to discern a characteristically 'feminine' style. This was centred around the informal community of women — their contacts and local networks which acted as an alternative to the political clubs and associations of their male partners. The success of these sisterly connections can be illustrated by the fact that from one chance meeting in 1820 Anne Lister and the Stuart family were able to monitor closely the representation of six seats within the West Riding.

The 1832 Reform Act does not seem to have had a discernible effect on limiting the activities of women in politics. To some extent, it may have been responsible for *encouraging* them. The lack of an organised women's suffrage movement does not indicate that women had accepted the terms of the Reform Act and contentedly accepted that they would henceforth be excluded from the political process along

[70] Thompson, 'Women, work and politics', p. 76.

with infants and the insane. Apart from the, admittedly important, ability to exercise the franchise, they were not politically impotent and were able to participate in other aspects of political and electoral life. In order to compensate for the fact that in the eyes of society they should not have a public role, they either created their own formal institutions, such as the Female Radical Association, formed in Bradford in 1839 or operated informal networks of contacts. For those women who were not interested in participating directly, politics could evidently be a consuming passion to distract them from the boredom and futility of their domestic existences.

Chapter V

The Triumph of the Middle Class — Independent Boroughs in the West Riding

The fervent hope of the middle class of the newly enfranchised boroughs after 1832, was that *their* constituencies would remain in *their* hands and be independent from the interference of the landed aristocracy, of the established church and of oligarchic and decayed medieval municipal institutions. In the West Riding it is tempting to draw the battle lines not only using old versus new analogies but also Liberal versus Tory. Whilst it is true that the preponderance of dissenters and the importance of industry in the new constituencies of the Riding encouraged the pre-eminence of the Liberal party; there were also strong conservative elements. In some constituencies — Sheffield is a prime example — this manifested itself as a Whig versus Liberal split. The textile districts of Huddersfield, Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford, displayed a different pattern. The merchants' traditional links with the Tory party were advanced with the introduction of a paternalist-based, Tory radicalism which sought to unite the party with the working class, who were suffering the brunt of the rapid industrialisation in the area. The party offered an amelioration of living and working conditions, but no extension of political rights. The introduction of the lower orders into politics was a high-risk strategy, and one the Liberals had no desire to participate in. It was moderately successful in the early eighteen-thirties. In some areas of the West Riding, however, by 1838, Chartism had supplanted Conservatism and the attention of the working class had turned away from social improvements alone towards extensive, political reform.

The threat of aristocratic involvement in the affairs of the new constituencies was not an empty one. The estates of the country's most powerful political families — Harewood, Fitzwilliam, Norfolk, Mexborough, Strafford and Wharncliffe — encircled the recently enfranchised boroughs.

In Sheffield, Bradford and Leeds, the aristocracy took no part, but in smaller boroughs such as Huddersfield and Wakefield the opportunities to add further constituencies to their extensive portfolios were too great to resist.[1] There were also internal struggles in the towns between powerful groups within the elite, seeking to gain the upper hand. This conflict could be between the traditional representatives of the middling sort — the bankers, lawyers and professionals — and the up and coming bourgeois industrial groups or merely, within their ranks. It is clear though, that by the end of the decade, the desire to win independence and to distinguish the larger new boroughs as bastions of the industrial middle class had been achieved.

Sheffield

Sheffield was one of the more unlikely of the urban industrial conurbations of the West Riding that sprang up in the eighteenth century. It was built, like Rome, on seven hills and these formed a natural barrier making communications with other urban centres difficult and preventing the physical expansion of the town which was necessitated by the population explosion of the early nineteenth century. The town's description as 'a kind of cul-de-sac on the natural route to nowhere'[2] is the key to a comprehension of Sheffield's unique political development in the eighteen-thirties. The staple trades of Sheffield artisans — cutlery and machine tools — were organised on a system of small masters and journeymen who employed apprentices directly or indirectly through a network of subcontracting.[3] The parvenu bourgeoisie of Sheffield were thus an independent, detached group comprising small masters operating in their own workshops with a tradition of political

[1] For further discussion, see Chapter VI.

[2] R N R Brown, 'Sheffield, its rise and growth', *Geography*, 23 (1936), p. 175.

[3] M Berg, 'Small Producer Capitalism in Eighteenth-century England', *Business History*, 35 (1993), pp. 17–39 and 'Women's Property and the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 24 (1993), pp. 233–50; R E Leader, *History of the Cutler's Company in Hallamshire*, 2 vols. (Sheffield, 1905–6); S Pollard, *A History of Labour in Sheffield* (Liverpool, 1959).

radicalism.[4] Their perspective was thus very different from the conservative mercantile interests in Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford. This contrast was sharply demonstrated by the Yorkshire election of 1807 when the small masters and independent craftsmen of Sheffield supported Lord Milton, whose family's estates bordered the north-eastern edge of the town. The woolstaplers of Leeds however, voted predominantly for Milton's Tory opponents, Lascelles and Wilberforce.[5]

Attitudes to the political development of the borough after the 1832 Reform Act have differed. The orthodox or customary opinion could be summarised as arguing that there was an absence of class conflict in Sheffield due to the radicalism of the small employers whose convictions were similar to those of their employees. In addition, in many of the major political campaigns of the period, working class interests were absorbed in the middle class organised ventures.[6] There is some validity in this view. For example, a survey of petitions sent from Sheffield to parliament in the eighteen-thirties reveals that they were dominated by middle class concerns; appeals were sent in by the Temperance Society, the Anti-Corn Law League and the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, among others.[7] However, this interpretation relies, in the main on contemporary evidence produced by the middle classes themselves. The role of the working-class is minimised precisely because the Sheffield bourgeoisie were so successful in marketing their aims and objectives in the political sphere. There was a vibrant and robust artisan political culture which was totally separate from and far from submerged by

[4] G P Jones, 'The Political Reform Movement in Sheffield', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, (1937) and D E Fletcher, 'Aspects of Liberalism in Sheffield, 1859–1886', (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1972), pp. 1–4

[5] *West Riding Poll Book (Wakefield, 1807)* and E A Smith, 'The Yorkshire Election of 1806 and 1807', pp. 69–90.

[6] This view has been synthesised thus, 'lacking the acrimony [of political differences] the Sheffield workers never had that hatred of their employer which could make a national agitation into an intensely personal struggle...', B Thickett, 'Some Aspects of Sheffield Radicalism, 1830 to 1870', (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Durham, 1960), p. 118. See also, Pollard, *A History of Labour*, p. 41 and E A Smith, *Whig Principles and Party Politics* (Manchester, 1973), p. 302.

[7] *Sheffield Local Register.*

the cosy elitist world of the middling orders in Sheffield society.[8] In political terms this manifested itself in many ways. Immediately after the passage of the Reform Act, there were organisations in Sheffield established to campaign for the secret ballot; to allow those who rented property from more than one landlord to be permitted to combine these in order to form a ten pound unit and of course by the end of the decade there was the popularity of the Sheffield Chartist movement.[9]

The activities of the politicised members of the artisan class in Sheffield barely penetrated the comfortable consciousness of the electorate. The bitterness of the unenfranchised of the town who had campaigned so extensively for reform burst out publicly immediately following the 1832 general election. On polling day, thirty thousand people had gathered to voice their support for the radical candidates Thomas Asline Ward, the chairman of the Sheffield Political Union and James Silk Buckingham.[10] When the result was announced, Parker and Buckingham headed the poll with Ward a poor third. The disappointment and discontent previously expressed about the limitations of the Reform Act were confirmed. Vocal dissent soon escalated into a full-scale riot, the targets of the malcontents being the houses of Parker's electoral committee. The riot ended as violently as it had begun, when the soldiers of the eighteenth Irish Foot Regiment were called in. They were ordered by the chief magistrate, Hugh Parker, to fire above the heads of the mob but a few soldiers panicked and aimed into the throng. The riot was broken up but at the cost of leaving five people dead — three of those children — and countless more injured.[11]

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[8] This reclamation of a separate working class political history in early nineteenth–century Sheffield has been led by J L Baxter and F K Donnelly. J L Baxter and F K Donnelly, 'The Revolutionary Underground in the West Riding: Myth or Reality?', *Past and Present* 73 (1974), pp. 124–32; Baxter and Donnelly, 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791–1820' in S Pollard and C Holmes (eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Barnsley, 1976), pp. 90–117 and Baxter, 'Origins of the Social War'.

[9] *Sheffield Local Register*; J L Baxter, 'Early Chartism and Labour class struggle, 1837–1840' in Pollard and Holmes, *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire*, pp. 135–58.

[10] *Sheffield Local Register.*

[11] *Sheffield Iris*, 5 January 1832

The riot and its aftermath polarised the electorate and the unenfranchised of the town. There was an attempt by the working class to contest John Parker's re-election as an MP after his promotion to the Treasury in 1837, but the candidate, John Bell, withdrew before the poll.[12] In fact, the manoeuvrings and frustrations of the working class were the source of both amusement and exasperation to the political elites of the borough. Having failed in their attempts to obtain the election of an independent democratic candidate in 1837, the Chartists entered into a Faustian pact with the Tory candidate, David Urquhart in the 1841 general election.[13] The appearance of Urquhart and his fellow Tory, William Sheppard, at the hustings accompanied by their Chartist minders drew cries of derisive laughter from the voters and they received only a few hundred votes.[14] Henry Ward, the radical MP for Sheffield realised however that the Chartist activities represented a potential threat to his constituency of voters, who may be driven into the arms of more conservative candidates. He wrote to his agent in Sheffield, William Bramley, 'the Chartists have done us unspeakable mischief amongst the middle classes without whom we can do nothing at all'.[15] In the event, both the Chartists and Conservatives were little threat to his position and he remained as member for the town until 1849.

The desperation of the Conservative group in Sheffield is amply illustrated by their unholy alliance with the Chartists in 1841. This frustration was born out of the party's total lack of success in penetrating the solid

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Chartism versus Whiggism. A Letter to the Rev. R S Bayley in reply to his charges against the Chartists* (Sheffield, 1841). The Chartists claimed that they were forced into this alliance because of the Whig party's lack of action on further reform and its failure to repeal the Corn Laws.

[14] The attraction to either the Chartists or Tories of this unlikely relationship is difficult to ascertain. That there was a secret pact was made public by William Barker, a 'moral force' Chartist and it is probable that the both parties hoped for increased publicity (and on the Tories part, for canvassing power) in a constituency that was proving arid ground for them. In the event the moral force Chartists split ranks and fielded their own candidate, Richard Marsden, although he withdrew before the poll. *Sheffield Local Register.*

[15] J Parker and H G Ward, *Chapters in the Political History of Sheffield, 1832–49* (Sheffield, 1884), Ward to Bramley, 13th March, 1840.

Liberal-radical alliance which coloured the political complexion of the town until after the 1867 Reform Act. The first Conservative member of parliament for Sheffield was not elected until 1868 and only then with the aid of the boundary changes of the Reform Act. This failure cannot be ascribed to a lack of organisation on the part of the Conservative group in the town. The tactics that were employed by Conservatives with a degree of success in neighbouring towns were also adopted by Sheffield Tories. The success of the Conservative party in Leeds in 1835, for example has been attributed to that party's success in the revising barrister's court the previous year.[16] The courts sat annually in order to update the electoral register; to hear new claims for qualifications for the franchise and to adjudicate upon objections to either new claimants or existing electors. The system which was designed for individual electors to make their claims for the franchise was rapidly hijacked by the rival political parties and became both a stimulus to and an important component within early attempts at party organisation. The Sheffield Tories launched their first salvo in their campaign to reduce the Liberal stranglehold on the borough, in 1837. They made two hundred and eighty-four objections to Liberal voters of which all but twelve were disallowed.[17] Inexplicably, the party made no claims for new electors, concentrating their attack on adherents to the Liberal cause; presumably this was a pre-determined tactical manoeuvre rather than an inability to uncover any new sources of support for the Conservative party. Of course, once the element of surprise had been lost, further Tory attacks using the medium of the revising barrister's court were muted by Liberal counter-offensives. Thus in 1841, the Liberals made four hundred and sixty-four new claims for the franchise, the Tories managing to strike off sixty-two. In reply, however, the Tories could only make eighty-eight new claims, the Liberal successfully countering ten of these.[18]

The Tories were also successful at allying themselves to important social, religious and economic groups within the town. The Conservative-

[16] Fraser, 'The Fruits of Reform: Leeds Politics in the 1830s', pp. 89–111.

[17] *Sheffield Local Register.*

[18] *Ibid.*

Chartist alliance in the eighteen-forties has already been documented. Their chief backers in the eighteen-thirties came from more traditional areas of support; principally from the finance, banking and legal sectors within the borough, headed by the Brownell and the Younge families. However, more importantly, they also formed an alliance with both established churchmen and a number of Wesleyan Methodist preachers who led the largest group of dissenters in the town. (See Table 5.1)

Table 5.1 The Religious structure of Sheffield in 1851.[19]

Religious group	*(%)*
Church of England	30.8
Roman Catholic	10.1
Wesleyan Methodist	25.1
Other Methodists	13.6
Baptist	6.0
Unitarian	2.8
Quaker	0.6
Other	0.3

The Anglican church was particularly weak in Sheffield compared with other similar urban industrial centres.[20] In Birmingham, for instance, almost half of all worshippers counted in the 1851 Religious Census were members of the established church. This impression is reinforced by looking at the numbers of churches and chapels within the parliamentary constituency. In 1838 there were only fifteen Anglican churches compared with forty-two dissenting chapels.[21] Therefore this Anglican-Wesleyan alliance signified an important alliance for the party. In 1837, the churchmen took the initiative encouraging John Thornley, a local Methodist preacher to stand as a Conservative candidate. This 'monstrous union' cut no ice with the electorate.

[19] Figures taken from the 1851 Religious census.

[20] For a discussion of the importance of religion in Sheffield, see E R Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial Society* (London, 1957).

[21] *Sheffield Local Register.*

The Conservatives were accused ironically of pandering to the working class of the town, 'a foolish, cowardly bullying mob' and conspiring to repeal the Reform Act.[22] This allegation of disreputable behaviour stuck and in the event Thornley polled less than a quarter of the total vote. Despite this rebuff, the church continued to express their support publicly for the Conservative candidates in the following election of 1841. A blue placard was published by Tories, signed by 18 of the local clergy stating that 'the interests of religion were essentially involved in the issues of the election and that voters should support Messrs Urquhart and Sheppard'.[23] This intervention proved to be even less successful than the church's previous attempt. Urquhart and Sheppard received fewer votes than Thornley had when he stood four years earlier.

The success of the Tories at appealing to the working class of the town has already been demonstrated. The candidates in their campaigns tried desperately to interest the Sheffield voters in issues that had proved electorally successful in neighbouring parliamentary boroughs in the West Riding. Thornley, in his address to the voters at the Angel Inn, the Tory headquarters in Sheffield emphasised his support for 'the poor man' and dramatically played down his association with the Conservative party:

> ...I am attached to the Constitution, institutions and established church of my country.... want to correct all existing abuses and to promise all rational principles of reform... opposed to new poor law as it is subversive to the poor man's right and repugnant to the common principles of humanity... I go to serve no particular party... call me Tory — Conservative — call me what you like — the principle which would guide me would be to look to measures and not men. It will not matter to me whether it is a Whig ministry or a Conservative ministry from which they came. If I go to parliament, I go to serve my country on independent principles and according to my conscience... want to promote a better observance of the Sabbath...[24]

[22] *An Exposure of the Extraordinary Combination of Certain Wesleyans and Churchmen to foist a Tory on Sheffield. By a Plain Man* (Sheffield, 1837).

[23] *Sheffield Local Register.*

[24] Sheffield Local History Collection, Miscellaneous Papers 202L, Thornley's address, 15 July 1837.

These attempts by the Conservatives to ally themselves with the poor, working man fell on stony ground. When questioned by voters Thornley betrayed his Conservative mien. He was opposed to repeal of the Corn Laws, secret ballot, any extension of the franchise and to shortening the duration of parliaments. The confused and contradictory messages emanating from the Conservative camp signify their ultimate weakness in the borough. Their frustration manifested itself in increasingly desperate attempts to appeal to any sector of the Sheffield population that would support the Conservative cause. Tactics which had proved successful in Leeds, Halifax and Huddersfield failed dismally in Sheffield.

The reasons for the Conservative's inadequate performances in Sheffield lie in the borough's unique social and economic structure. Areas that had proved ripe for exploitation in similar parliamentary constituencies such as the inactivity of the Whig government, factory reform and the deficiencies of the new Poor Law were less fertile in Sheffield. Throughout the eighteen-thirties one of the town's two Liberal MPs came from the radical wing of the party. Buckingham and Ward were at least as critical of the Whig government's inadequacies as the Tories. For example, Ward quickly realised the profit that he would gain from the Liberals in the town if he attacked the government. He wrote letters on successive days to the leader of the Liberal association in Sheffield seeking his support for his nomination as the candidate to replace Buckingham. A dramatic change of emphasis is apparent as he tailors his remarks to suit the radical nature of the Liberal group in the town:

> ...I have voted and spoken in favour of Short Parliaments and of the Ballot, yet I do not think the refusal of the Ministry as yet to make these questions open questions any ground for withholding from them my support...
>
> ...when I came to the House in 1833 I was a party man and placed myself blindly under the guidance of those who gave us the Reform Bill. I was deceived. I took my own line accordingly. I always defend my opinions... this is what I conceive a great

> and intelligent constituency like that of Sheffield would desire and require in its representatives...[25]

The question of factory reform was never relevant in the town because although factories existed — the first was built in 1823 — they usually housed a large number of small independent and individualistic craftsmen rather than being managed by one large, capitalist employer as in the textile towns. The Liberals were successful in harnessing this independent, usually radical outlook. John Parker commended the survival of this small-scale structure, commenting that it was 'as it ought to be, republican and not an oligarchy. It is in the town and not in the hands of a few capitalists'.[26] The Tories frantically tried to use the issue of the poor law to rally support, labelling the new poor law as contrary to the principles of humanity. However, the Sheffield electorate, radical in much of their outlook were cautious in the matter of spending ratepayers money. Thus John Parker, adeptly tailored his address to the electors in 1834 to take into consideration this sentiment. He said the new poor law was a necessity because of the 'high costs of the old system and the advantage to the ratepayers of the new'.[27] This circumspect attitude to the spending of public money can be discovered by an analysis of the long negotiations held in the borough over the issue of establishing a municipal corporation. As early as 1836, Hugh Parker, the chief magistrate of the town, wrote to the Police Committee suggesting municipal corporation, stipendiary magistrates and Sheffield's inclusion in the West Riding magistracy for the better administration of justice in the town.[28] The next decade saw numerous petitions and counter-petitions on the subject of municipal corporation. The Privy Council's investigation into the matter uncovered the revealing statistic that the expenditure on local government in 1841 was a mere £8,750 which would rise to only £12,000 per annum if a

[25] J Parker and H G Ward, *Chapters in the Political History of Sheffield, 1832–49* (Sheffield, 1884). 20–21 February 1837, letters from Ward to Bramley.

[26] *Ibid.*, Parker to Leader, 1835.

[27] J Parker, *To the Electors of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1834).

[28] *Sheffield Local Register.*

municipal corporation was established.[29] Once the council was finally appointed in 1843 its development can best be summed up as one of masterly inactivity. In the spring of 1852, for example, council expenditure was so low that there was no need to set a borough rate and in the summer of 1853 it assembled to discover that there was no business on the agenda.[30] The Conservative party in Sheffield, thus found their ace cards trumped at every turn — they were termed more profligate, more extreme and more disreputable than the most radical members of the Liberal party. By the eighteen-forties to these charges was added a further — that they were in the thrall of the dangerous and criminal Chartists.

The independence of the Sheffield electorate is also demonstrated by the lack of interference in their affairs from representatives of the major landowners who owned property within the town and around its limits. The potential for intervention was always there and in May 1835 *The Times* of London drew attention to the prominent influence of the Duke of Norfolk and Earl Fitzwilliam over the town.[31] The most obvious source of patronal influence came from the Duke of Norfolk who owned 19,440 acres in the West Riding, the most lucrative centred upon his Park estate in the centre of Sheffield. The green pastures and parkland of the Duke of Norfolk's estate in contrast to the overcrowded, smoky and poverty-stricken streets of the remainder of the town acted as a constant visual reminder of the Fitzalan-Howards' interest. The Duke refused to release any of his estate to alleviate the rapidly expanding population of the early nineteenth century with the result that the population of central wards stagnated whilst in the neighbouring townships of Brightside and Attercliffe-cum-Darnall the number of inhabitants increased by over four hundred per cent.[32] Norfolk was Lord of the manor of Sheffield and head of the manorial court which remained active in the borough until 1844 although its main concerns were limited to the

[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *The Times*, 30 May 1835.
[32] *Sheffield Local Register.*

inspection of markets and the collection of small debts. His relationship with the town was always uneasy. In 1847 the council decided not to purchase the manorial rights from the Duke but also tried unsuccessfully to prevent him from keeping and hunting game on his estates, an occupation that must have been carried on uneasily amongst the chimney-stacks and furnaces of the town.[33] The estates of Earl Fitzwilliam and Lord Wharncliffe both lay beyond the northern limits of the parliamentary constituency; but whilst the Palladian architecture of Wentworth Woodhouse and the less imposing features of Wortley Hall dominated the local countryside neither had the same symbolic effect as the Duke of Norfolk's estate in the centre of the town.

Patrician involvement in local borough politics remained an ever-present spectre hanging over the town but, whilst allegations of aristocratic interference were a useful electioneering ploy, none of the local aristocrats showed any desire to embrace the constituency within their substantial portfolios of electoral interests. The fears expressed in a verse from a satirical ditty published just after the Reform Act proved to be groundless:

> So at last, my most Noble
> With no little trouble
> And plans you've ne'er ceas'd to project
> By Reforming so thorough
> Your 'estate's' made a Borough
> And we now come to see the effect
> Norfolk's Jockey[34]

John Parker, member for the borough for thirty years, was the most vulnerable to accusations that he was a mere nominee of Norfolk. As a member of the leading legal firm in the town and the son of Hugh Parker, the town's chief magistrate, he managed the Fitzalan-Howard's local legal affairs. In 1835, his radical opponent, James Silk Buckingham tried to assert his own independence as an outsider by alleging that Parker had 'held confidential offices under the largest landed proprietor in the town' and that his candidacy

[33] J M Furness, *Record of Municipal Affairs in Sheffield, 1843–1893* (Sheffield, 1893).

[34] Sheffield Local History Library. Jackson Collection, 1630. *Hints for Tories* (Sheffield, 1832).

was supported by both Norfolk and Fitzwilliam. He warned the electorate against adopting two townsfolk as their representatives — fortunately, he was the only outside candidate facing two local men — saying that 'you [the electors] will become the serfs of two great families who will select their own nominees'.[35]

In fact, Norfolk, Fitzwilliam and Wharncliffe were far more concerned with maintaining their electoral interests in their proprietary boroughs and in the new county constituency of the West Riding. It was representation at a county level that brought status and it was in that arena that the families wished their influence to be known. Wharncliffe offered the small Tory group in town his endorsement but very little else. His finances were tied up with obtaining parliamentary seats for his two sons — James, as member for the West Riding and John, as the representative for Halifax — and he had little desire to extend his resources further. Fitzwilliam's major concern was maintaining the claim of his eldest son, Lord Milton, to one of the county seats. He also managed his nomination boroughs of Peterborough and Malton and again had little interest in intervening in Sheffield. Norfolk concentrated his resources on the boroughs bordering his family seat at Arundel Castle, namely Arundel itself and Horsham. Norfolk's lack of concern for local Sheffield politics can be demonstrated by examining the patterns of voting of those electors residing within his Park estate. The steward managing his local interests, Michael Ellison supported Parker and Bailey in 1832 but only 6.3 per cent of the voters living in the Park district shared his preferences. This sharply contrasts with the territorial patterns of voting that occurred in the county.[36]

The success of the middle class elite in Sheffield at retaining the support of both the landed aristocracy and the labouring classes whilst promoting their own interests can most obviously be illustrated by the period of reform agitation in the early eighteen-thirties. The Sheffield Political

[35] *Sheffield Iris*, 20 January 1835.
[36] See Chapter VII.

Union, initially a working class organisation, was rapidly appropriated by the dominant mercantile and professional fraternity within the town. All social and ideological differences were subsumed by the desire to achieve some measure of parliamentary reform and to place Sheffield upon the parliamentary map of England. Thus, the Sheffield Political Union won statements of support from the greatest landowner in the borough, the Duke of Norfolk; the professional classes; the capitalist merchants and master cutlers, one of whom, Thomas Asline Ward, assumed the presidency of the Union and from the working class who provided the bulk of the membership of the organisation. During the so-called May days, at the height of the reform agitation, the Political Union was growing at the rate of fifteen hundred members per week.[37] The predominant view can be summed up by a pamphlet written by John Parker, who would become one of the town's first members of parliament. The leaflet, which achieved a wide circulation in the town and which was sent along with other petitions and appeals from the townsfolk to parliament, was entitled *A Statement of the Population of the Town of Sheffield*; and argued that Sheffield should be included in the list of boroughs being drawn up for enfranchisement, not only because of its large and growing population, but also because 'Sheffield... may be considered the metropolis of its own trade'.[38]

There was no organised opposition to parliamentary reform within the town; the divisions were between those who supported the bill in its various incarnations and those who regarded it as an unsatisfactory compromise, particularly by ignoring areas such as the secret ballot and restriction of spending on elections. By the time of the very first election campaign in the town, which occurred barely six months after the enactment of the legislation, these divisions had become acrimonious and embittered among sectors of the population. Elections in the eighteen-thirties were characterised by the essential radical nature of the middle class electorate who had been enfranchised. The fact that this radicalism did not always manifest itself in

[37] J L Baxter, 'Origins of the Social War', volume 2, p. 343.

[38] J Parker, *A Statement of the Population of the Town of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1830).

terms of electoral success demonstrated that even without an effective opposition party in the town, the more radical candidates would not be elected without paying close attention to organisation and tactics.

Of the four men who were eventually put forward for the 1832 election, three vied for the position as the popular, radical candidate. The fourth, was John Parker, who had attempted to spearhead the reform campaign in the town with his pamphlet written, with an eye to the future, in 1830. Parker represented the small, but socially dominant, Anglican establishment in Sheffield. He was prominent both because of his father's position as the town's chief magistrate and also because of the family bank, Parker, Shore and Company which financed much of local industry. His connections with the local aristocracy led to claims that he was a 'mere nominee' of the Duke of Norfolk.[39] Having associated himself, publicly and in writing, with the Reform Act, Parker did little to emulate the radical credentials of the opposing candidates. His policies were those of a cautious moderate. He was against further parliamentary reform, in favour of a repeal of the Corn Laws and in 1834 supported the reform of the poor law.[40] He always emphasised his independence describing his position in 1834, thus: 'I gave general confidence to the Ministers... [but] when they opposed a thing *in toto* which I thought right I would vote against them'.[41]

Of the three radical candidates, Buckingham had to do the most work to establish himself and his views amongst a sceptical, Sheffield electorate.[42] He was not a local man, but a radical speaker and journalist who had travelled widely. He put himself forward as a reforming candidate, identifying various irregularities that should be redressed:

> Reform of the representation... the Bill is not a final measure, but appeals to the middle class as those least likely to be blinded by extreme poverty or excess of wealth.

[39] *Hints for Tories* (Sheffield, 1832).

[40] J Parker, *To the Electors of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1834).

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] For a discussion of Buckingham's career see Turner, *James Silk Buckingham.*

> Reform of Taxation... tax on amount of property owned. The tax should be five to ten per cent on the poor and forty to fifty per cent on the rich. To replace all restraints on commerce...
>
> Reform of the Church... an equalisation of the wealth of the church among all functionaries...
>
> Reform in Law... a simplified legal system...
>
> Reform in education... universal education, free worship of any sect but every church and meeting place should be attached to a free school for all children 5 to 10 years old... The working class man should use his leisure hours reading Homer and Virgil not intoxicating himself with gin or stupefying himself with porter and then commencing a brawl...[43]

He was an eloquent speaker and had won fame and renown for his attacks on the abuses of privilege by the East India Company, a factor which won him much support in Sheffield. He was also a leading member of the British Temperance League and became its vice-president but in the 1832 election he played down this aspect of his policy interests. The fact that he was not a local man worked both for and against him. As an outsider he could claim that he was immune from local influences and interferences and he sought to inflate the dangers of these — especially of aristocratic intervention — in his election addresses. He paraded his independence and the fact that he was above local squabbles to the electorate as his greatest asset, whilst reassuring them that he would watch out for their particular interests assiduously:

> ...in the first place, the local interests of the town, its commerce, its prosperity should be well understood and carefully attended to.... [but] when there are two MPs it is neither intended nor expected that *both* of these shall be local and resident members...[44]

On the other hand, his activities abroad raised many suspicions in the town. The *Sheffield Mercury* denounced him as an adventurer and he was termed 'a Parroquet from Calcutta' — a reference to his journeys throughout India — in a pre-election pamphlet.[45]

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[43] J S Buckingham, *The Qualifications and Duties of a Member of Parliament* (Nottingham, 1831).

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] *Hints for Tories.*

The mixed feelings in the town about Buckingham's candidacy encouraged a group of electors to form a deputation and to ask Samuel Bailey to stand, thus forcing a contest. The deputation consisted mainly of those who had supported Parker and it was hoped that there would be a loose alliance between Bailey and the more whiggish Parker.[46] Bailey was an intellectual; a philosopher and an author on such diverse topics as finance and metaphysics. He was the president and founder member of the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society and was known locally as 'the Benthamite of Hallamshire'.[47] He was also a successful cutlery merchant and had visited America to establish business connections and trading links there. He was a director of the Sheffield Banking Company, a competitor to the family bank of his competitor. He summarised his policies thus 'I am for freedom from monopoly; for liberty versus oppression; for knowledge versus ignorance; for economy versus extravagance; for equity versus injustice...'.[48] He advocated triennial parliaments and the ballot. However, Bailey was essentially an intellectual rather than an activist. His desire for the voters to have a completely free choice resulted in his decision not to canvass them for support or to campaign publicly, apart from setting down his opinions on policy matters. This, and his reputation for mistreating his cutlery workers hampered his campaign.

Towards nomination day, Thomas Asline Ward was persuaded to stand. He was president of the Political Union, a recent Master Cutler and a popular local figure. Before entering the campaign he had undertaken a canvass and secured the promises of seventeen hundred men; but due to the incomplete nature of the register it was unclear how many of these would actually qualify as voters.[49] Ward was enticed to stand as a candidate largely because of the support of the working men in the town. As early as July 1832 they had

[46] *Sheffield Local Register.*

[47] Obituary of Bailey, *Sheffield Independent*, 20 October 1870.

[48] *Sheffield Local Register.*

[49] Philo Veritas, *Letter to J Sanson, esq., the Returning Officer on the Proceedings of the Recent Election* (Sheffield, 1835).

pledged their support to him and started a fund for potential election costs.[50] The unenfranchised played a dominant role throughout the campaign, attending election rallies calling for the candidates to support further parliamentary reform, if elected. On polling day, thirty thousand people gathered to voice their opinions.[51] The show of hands gave overwhelming support to Ward and Buckingham; yet when the result was announced, Parker and Buckingham headed the poll with Ward coming a poor third.

Disappointment with the result flowed over into violence. The riots that followed the final declaration of the poll focused on Parker as the source of Ward's downfall. In reality, as an analysis of the poll reveals, it was Bailey rather than Parker who had caused Ward's defeat. Ward and Bailey, and to a lesser extent Buckingham were all competing for the same voters. A high percentage of the electorate supported either Bailey and Parker or Ward and Parker; thus the votes for Ward were cancelled out by those for Bailey. The reason that Buckingham triumphed over Ward and Bailey was that nearly one-third of his support came from those voting for him alone. Buckingham had spent his campaign encouraging his supporters to plump for him and enough were convinced to push him up the poll.[52] Parker succeeded in winning the moderate vote and also benefited from being the favourite second choice to Ward, Buckingham or Bailey.

Buckingham's superior grasp of campaign tactics was demonstrated again in 1835. This contest was far more acrimonious than the 1832 campaign. Buckingham's activities in parliament had not been well received in the town. A section of the Sheffield elite were starting to become uneasy and distrustful about him. In 1834, Robert Leader, the editor of the *Sheffield Independent* and a prominent member of the town's establishment wrote to Parker saying that 'his activities though great had been ill-regulated, his attitude uncertain and

[50] *Sheffield Local Register.*

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] For an analysis of plumping see Chapter III.

his votes eccentric'.[53] This suspicion about Buckingham's reliability and his conduct in parliament was exacerbated by the fact that the temperance issue was far more prominent in this campaign than it had been in 1832. In 1834, Buckingham had sponsored an inter-departmental committee which 'for the first time officially gathered and examined evidence concerning the extent of drinking and propounded remedial measures'.[54] The report of this body led to the establishment of a select committee of the House of Commons to enquire into the drink trade. Understandably, these efforts met with a mixed reception in the town of Sheffield. Unfortunately, those who rallied round Buckingham's efforts to regulate alcohol and the drink trade were associated with the minority, Conservative group in the town. Samuel Roberts, a leading Conservative and temperance supporter in the town wrote in support of 'the credit which Mr Buckingham had acquired here... he denounced the greatly increasing and horrible practice of drunkenness'.[55]

Buckingham had made enemies amongst sections of the liberal elite, the brewers and publicans and members of the working class in the town. As a result, a group calling themselves the 'Bailey Society' encouraged Bailey to stand again as a candidate despite his earlier decision to take no part.[56] The circumstances of Bailey's candidacy led to furious exchanges between his supporters and those of Buckingham. It was alleged that a contest would disturb the peace of the town and that Bailey's nomination had been procured by members of the drink trade

> On the Monday before nomination there was a large meeting of tavern keepers, beerhouse men and dram shop owners at the Great Brown Bear... in order to use all their influence to oust Mr Buckingham and to *compel* Mr Bailey to accept the seat which *they* meant to procure for him...[57]

[53] Leader to Parker, 16 February 1834 in Parker and Ward, *Chapters in the Political History of Sheffield.*

[54] *British Temperance League, Centenary Conference* (Sheffield, 1934).

[55] *Letter to G C Holland, MD on the coalition of publicans and sinners to disturb the peace of the town and perpetuate drunkenness. A Freeholder* [Samuel Roberts] (Sheffield, 1835).

[56] Obituary of Bailey, *Sheffield Independent,* 20 October 1870.

[57] *Ibid.*

Bailey's supporters refuted the claims, arguing that Bailey's principled nature meant that he would not be 'a champion of intemperance' nor would he collude in any pact with the brewers. Instead, 'his superior attainments, his close habits of observation, his intimate knowledge of all that was connected with the commerce of his native town and his high literary reputation' placed him far above Buckingham who was only keen to promote his own interests.[58]

At the close of polling, Parker and Buckingham led Bailey by only one hundred and two hundred votes respectively. The contest had virtually by-passed Parker with all attention focused on the dispute between Buckingham and Bailey for the cloak of radical respectability. Buckingham was eventually victorious, not on policy grounds, but on his superior grasp of electoral tactics. Bailey took no part in the campaign, refusing to canvass for votes or to attend pre-election rallies. This disdain for the normal practice of electioneering attracted much attention and to this was attributed Bailey's defeat:

> ...acting on his often declared principles as to the use of undue influence, and the *perfect* freedom of elections... [his supporters] disdained to canvass their own workpeople and dependants and would not even inquire how they intended to vote, nor afterwards how they *had* voted...[59]

In contrast, Buckingham threw three lavish receptions for those who had voted for him and their families after the election.[60] Buckingham's supreme use of tactics both before and after the election was reflected during the course of the contest itself. Bailey's electoral committee were divided about the procedure of the election. Some members wished to poll all Bailey's supporters on the first day, whilst others wanted to hold large reserves of electors for the last day and swamp the poll at the end. Finally, it was decided to take the latter course. However, Bailey, made a surprisingly good showing on the first day of the poll ending up only a few votes behind Buckingham.

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[58] *Reply to a letter addressed to G C Holland MD by a Freeholder, with additional remarks on the comparative claims of Mr Buckingham and Mr Bailey. A Cool Observer* (Sheffield, 1835).

[59] Philo Veritas, *Letter to J Sanson, esq.*

[60] *Sheffield Iris*, 20 January 1835.

This encouraged Buckingham's committee to redouble their efforts at persuading their potential supporters to plump for their candidate and to forgo one of their two votes. An analysis of the final state of the poll illustrates the success of these efforts. Buckingham received nearly sixty-four per cent of his vote from plumpers and only two hundred and eight electors voted for both Buckingham and Bailey.

Buckingham's term as MP for the town came to an ignominious end. In 1837 he withdrew as a candidate for the borough for financial reasons following the failure of his attempts to win compensation for his losses in India.[61] Despite his radical reputation and professed policies, his behaviour in Parliament remained inconsistent, culminating with an inexplicable act of treachery as far as the liberals in the town were concerned. In 1836, he voted with the Conservatives in support of the re-introduction of a writ for the borough of Stafford, a notoriously corrupt constituency that had narrowly avoided disenfranchisement. To the Liberals of Sheffield, this action was tantamount to voting for corruption and the sin was compounded by the fact that his one vote gave the Tories a majority.[62] However Buckingham remained popular with the town's population and even the *Sheffield Independent* had to admit that he could have been re-elected as member for the town.[63]

In their search for a replacement for Buckingham, the elite of Sheffield, via the town clerk, Edward Bramley, set out the requirements for a potential member for the town, in a letter to Henry Ward, who eventually was adopted as a candidate,

> ... it will be absolutely necessary that he [a future candidate] should be an advocate for the Ballot, a general supporter of the present Ministry, possess a popular manner and a fluency of speech... [64]

[61] Turner, *James Silk Buckingham*, p. 338–43.

[62] Parker and Ward, *Chapters in the Political History of Sheffield.*

[63] *Sheffield Independent*, 22 July 1837.

[64] Parker and Ward, *Chapters in the Political History of Sheffield.* 17 February 1837, letter from Bramley to Ward, 17 February 1837.

In alighting upon Ward as a candidate, the elite of Sheffield showed their predilection for a non-local man to run in tandem with Parker. The tempo of electoral activity diminished so rapidly after the 1837 that Ward rarely had to visit the town and conducted his tenure as MP for the town from his London home, via letters to Bramley in Sheffield. Despite this distance, during the ten years that he was MP for the borough, he never failed to achieve less than seventy-three per cent of the total vote. However, this achievement is probably due more to the fact that there was no credible opposition during the late eighteen-thirties and early eighteen-forties and to the fact that political excitement in Sheffield turned to the activities of the Chartists.

Bradford

There has been an erroneous temptation to portray Bradford as a 'radical borough' in the eighteen-thirties, largely based upon claims about the weakness of Conservatism in the town.[65] However, although Sheffield could, on these grounds, have a greater claim to the title it would be misleading for either constituency to be given the nomenclature. The electorates of both towns depicted elements in society which had been marginalised by the pre–1832 system of representation, and it is true to say that the parliamentary politics of Sheffield and Bradford were characterised by the struggles and concerns typical of industrial towns; but that does not signify that they were in any sense radical. Moreover there are significant differences between the politics of the two towns — primarily due to the strength of Conservatism in Bradford.

Bradford was built on wool. By the seventeen-seventies its production of cloth had outstripped that of the traditional centre of the industry, East

[65] Wright, 'A Radical Borough: Parliamentary Politics in Bradford, 1832–1841', pp. 132–66 and D James, *Bradford* (Halifax, 1990), pp. 37–45. A more realistic picture is given by Koditschek's neo-Marxist analysis of Bradford, Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society*, especially pp. 320–50 and pp. 414–44.

Anglia.[66] The town had become synonymous with the manufacture of plain and mixed worsted fabric and thus by the nineteenth century the title, Worstedopolis referred to Bradford rather than to Worstead, the village outside Norwich where its production had originated.[67] Although the industry was founded on the domestic system of putting-out work to individual families in the scattered workshops and cottages in and around the town by the eighteen-thirties it could boast upwards of twenty firms, employing from fifty to five hundred workers apiece.[68] Thus the experience of the Bradford workforce was not one forming a part of a large number of independent, small businesses; but of labouring for an elite dominated originally by woolstaplers and merchants whose ranks were joined in the early nineteenth century by mill owners and warehousemen. This crucial difference between the working experiences of Bradford and Sheffield was reflected in the political character of the town. The Tory-Liberal split in Bradford was not, as in Sheffield, between the old, traditional Anglican middle class of professional men — surgeons, bankers and lawyers — and the newer bourgeois industrialists. The traditional elite was, of course, important. A leading Bradford surgeon echoed the opinions of countless other urban professionals throughout the country, decrying the entry into the upper echelons of society of those engaged in trade:

> There is no kind of Society here, everyone being engaged in trade and thinking of nothing else... The lower order of people are little removed above the brute creation, being the rudest and most vulgar people under the sun... A great majority of the richest class is not much better, for they have generally risen from low origin and retain for the most part their vulgar manners...[69]

Instead, the industrialists were split almost equally between the two parties rather than forming a united body, which could then be neatly summarised as the new elites opposing the old:

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[66] G Firth, *Bradford and the Industrial Revolution* (Halifax, 1990), especially pp. 141–68.

[67] W Cudworth, *Worstedopolis* (Bradford, 1888).

[68] G Firth, 'The Bradford Trade in the Nineteenth century' in Wright and Jowitt (eds), *Victorian Bradford*, pp. 8–13 and Koditschek, *Class formation and Urban Industrial Society*, pp. 595–6.

[69] J Simpson, *The Diary of Dr John Simpson of Bradford* (Bradford, 1981), p. 11.

Table 5.2 The Political differences of the Bradford industrialists in 1837.

Occupation	*Tory*	*Liberal*
Manufacturers	42.4	57.6
Merchants and staplers	58.7	41.3

Table 5.2 demonstrates the split between the two sectors of the Bradford industrialists, the manufacturers of various kinds — spinners, dyers and weavers, for example — and the merchants, commissioning agents and wool staplers. Although, the former were slightly more of a Liberal bent and among the latter there were a few more Tory supporters, the overall impression is of a very even split between the two parties. The support of a considerable section of the industrial elite bolstered Conservatism in the town. The party was not driven to the margins, as was the case in Sheffield, but was able to establish a toe-hold for itself in line with the experiences of the other West Riding textile towns.[70] The extra dimension that the Toryism of these textile towns possessed was the equation of Tory radicalism with the factory reform campaigns of the eighteen-thirties. The towns of Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax, Wakefield and Bradford were enthralled by the heady language and charismatic campaigning of Richard Oastler, the Factory King, who resided on their doorsteps. A number of Tory mill owners were recruited to his paternalistic campaign and thus popularised the Conservative message at a time when, the Liberals were in the ascendancy following the reform agitation. Until Chartism re-captured the political attention of the working classes, their focus was channelled towards social reform against a background of outbreaks of cholera, the vicissitudes of employment, the filth and poverty. A German merchant who had travelled round the country in the eighteen-thirties regarded his arrival at Bradford as entering the portals of hell:

[70] Halifax and Leeds returned a Tory member in 1835, Wakefield in 1837 and Huddersfield came within twenty-five votes of doing the same in 1837.

> Every other factory town in England is a paradise in comparison to this hole. In Manchester the air lies like lead upon you; in Birmingham it is just as if you are sitting with your nose in a stove pipe; in Leeds you have to cough with the dust and stink as if you had swallowed a pound of Cayenne pepper at one go — but you can still put up with all that. In Bradford, however, you think you have been lodged in no other place than with the Devil incarnate... If anyone wants to feel how a poor sinner is perhaps tormented in Purgatory, let him travel to Bradford.[71]

At the forefront of the factory reform campaign in Bradford was John Wood, the largest millowner in the town who concentrated on the issue of child labour. Although he employed children in his own factory he introduced a factory school and improved working conditions and housing for his employees. In 1833 he unilaterally reduced the working day to eleven hours despite the competitive pressures of other millowners.[72] A confidant of Oastler, Wood persuaded him to concentrate on the issue of child labour and for his various efforts was rewarded with public approbation, including the dedication to him of a number of sentimental poems depicting the immorality and wretchedness of child labour.[73]

The Bradford Tories were thus able to move beyond the Church and King Conservatism that although popular with the traditional Anglican elite, failed to muster much support from the industrial sector, from employers or employees. In an attempt to capitalise on the success of the factory reform campaign the Bradford Operative Conservative Society was formed in 1837, offering a reading room and meeting place for working-class supporters of the Conservative cause. Membership fees (of sixpence per quarter) were waived if unemployment or sickness prevented men from paying. The society was also used to canvass and organise election campaigns with committee members 'chosen out of different parts of the town, so as to be ready in any event to

[71] G Weerth, *Samtliche Werke* (Berlin, 1957), cited in J A Jowitt (ed.), *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth century Yorkshire* (Bradford, 1986), pp. 10–11.

[72] J T Ward, 'Two Pioneers in Industrial Reform', *Journal of the Bradford Textile Society*, (1964), pp. 33–51 and Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-industrial Society*, pp. 420–2.

[73] One such mawkish piece was *Jane the Factory Girl* by Robert Dibb of Dewsbury, printed in dedication to John Wood and sold at a price of 1d, all profits going towards the campaign to reduce the working day to ten hours.

assist the secretary in giving information to the members'.[74] However, it was unable to recapture the spirit of the crusade against the ravages of industrialisation and never attracted more than a couple of hundred members.

Appeals to gain the support of the working classes are a consistent thread throughout Conservative electoral propaganda in Bradford, giving further scope to their traditional litany of supporting the established institutions of the country. Thus a poster in 1837 called for electors to 'shew your determination to support the THRONE, the ALTAR and the COTTAGE'.[75] A stalwart campaigner for the Conservative cause and the Ten Hours Bill the Reverend G S Bull, incumbent of the incumbent of Byerley, a parish just outside Bradford, also directed his numerous addresses towards the working men and adopted populist causes:

> ...take as many taxes as possible from the poor and lay them on the rich, on property, on capital. Repeal the beer shop act, and remove all that you can from the Malt Tax, and lay it on the wines which spread the boards of the rich and on the ardent spirits which ruin the constitutions of the poor; and thus let the comforts of the cottage be increased by two barrels of good and cheap beer, one to broach when the other is done...[76]

Despite general impressions of Bradford's radicalism and the fact that, in the kingdom as a whole, opinion was running in favour of the liberals and reform; the Conservatives in the town were upbeat, energetic and confident, presenting a populist programme and running well organised campaigns. This point was recognised by their Liberal opponents, who had carried out a through canvass of the town after the 1835 election when a Tory had headed the poll:

> To communicate the result of this examination is the object of this letter. And we shall perhaps be best able to do this by giving you an outline of the present state of the parties in the borough. Happily there are now but two — Tories and Whigs. About equal in number but very unequal in discipline. The former with characteristic skill and cunning are in a complete state of organisation — united as

[74] Bradford Archives, DB 16, case 22, number 24. Rules and Regulations of the Bradford Operatives Conservative Society.

[75] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/20. 20 June 1837, Tory campaign poster.

[76] Bradford Archives, DB13 case 65. *To the Candidates of the Borough of Bradford. G S Bull, incumbent of Byerley, near Bradford* (Bradford, 1832)and J C Gill, *Parson Bull of Byerley* (London, 1973).

> one man prepared for every contingency that might arise and confident of success...[77]

The Conservatives received a boost to their confidence by the apparent defection of John Hardy, who had stood as a pro-reform, Liberal candidate, to their cause almost immediately after his election in 1832. Hardy had good Liberal credentials. He was a Methodist and professed support for religious liberty; he was an industrialist, owner of the Low Moor ironworks and had been a candidate for Pontefract in 1826 challenging the established Tory interests of Lord Galway and the Earl of Mexborough. Although the requisition of 1831 which invited Hardy to stand as a candidate for the future borough of Bradford, was signed by a number of Tories; radicals such as Robert Milligan and Titus Salt also supported his candidature.[78] However, once in Parliament, Hardy sat on the opposition benches and opposed measures for the abolition of stamp duty on newspapers, for Church Reform and for replacing church rates with an increase on Land Tax. The Bradford Liberals were confused and incensed; especially when Hardy continued to profess his Liberal credentials and stood as a Liberal in the 1835 election. This was in spite of having the unanimous support of the Tory election committee led by Matthew Thompson and the decision of the Tories not to put up their own *bona fide* Conservative candidate. Liberal campaign posters desperately drew the electors' attention to Hardy's inconsistent behaviour:

> To the lovers of natural history will shortly be exhibited in Bradford the Andro-Chameleon. Which since its first introduction to notice, has undergone the following changes. Its face alone is of unchangeable brass, and when it was first taken on board the ship of Reform it was a deep Orange, but soon after (it is supposed from fear of being thrown overboard) it became of a deadly White, and being then taken on board the brig, Conservative, it gradually became striped with Blue. It was shifted thence to the barque Tory, and now appears entirely Blue, indeed so great its capability of change, that it is impossible to tell what may be the colour it will next assume; but it is supposed by those skilled in such matters that it will become Green with disappointment and vexation...[79]

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[77] Bradford Archives, Byles MSS, 9D77/7. December 1835, Robert Milligan et al [members of the Liberal election committee] to George Hadfield. The reference to there being now only two parties in the borough pertained to the fact that the Whigs and the Liberals had determined to work together after the dramatic defeat of Hadfield in 1835.

[78] *Leeds Mercury*, 20 August 1831.

[79] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/202. 8 June 1841, Whig campaign poster.

Hardy's own explanation for his conduct was far from satisfactory. At a dinner, given for him at Bradford in December 1835 he accounted for his behaviour in parliament in a decidedly ambiguous manner:

> ... I felt it my duty to go to Parliament with that maxim on my mind... to look to measures and not to men... Gentlemen, I do not wish nor do I care to avoid the inference that may often arise from my conduct in this respect; that I may sometimes be called an adherent of this party and at other times an adherent of that; and at others I may be considered a political partisan of those men whom I may feel it my duty to support with my vote upon most frequent occasions. This I cannot help. I am willing to take good reasons from any man who will present them to me, let them come from what side of the Commons they may, but when those who furnish those reasons to me themselves desert them, I feel myself bound, to avoid inconsistency of conduct, to attach myself to the principle and reject the example...[80]

The relative success of the Conservatives in capturing the moral and populist high ground by allying the cause of factory reform with their customary church and king programme could not be sustained throughout the eighteen-thirties. The formation of the Operatives Conservative Society, the campaign against the new Poor Law and the adoption of a charismatic and fanatical campaigner, William Busfeild junior in 1837 could not prevent the Liberals gaining the upper hand. Busfeild was a young and ambitious politician who owned a vast estate at Milner Field near Bingley. However, his tempestuous behaviour and intemperate language could not disguise his landowning credentials and his distaste for all things industrial:

> ...he was the very personification and type of John Bull — fearless, straight-tilting and in the cause he thought right determined to the verge of obstinacy. Above all he was independent. He was too decided in his views to be an obedient partisan.[81]

Although he professed support for the improvement of the condition of the handloom weaver, Busfeild was at heart a member of the squirearchy and was to form an important role in the Young England movement which catapulted Disraeli to fame in the 1840s. His campaign appeared ungenuine and artificial and the Liberals were able to regain the initiative. However, in the early 1830s Bradford was a beacon for Conservative paternalists and Tory radicals. There was hope for the Conservative cause in the urban, industrial

[80] *Leeds Intelligencer*, 5 December 1835.

[81] Obituary of Busfeild. *Yorkshire Post*, 1 April 1889.

conurbations. If the message was right, the right could mount a challenge in the heart of Liberal country — and ultimately succeed.

The Liberals in Bradford should have possessed all the winning cards and should have withstood the Tory onslaught. They suffered from their inability to select popular, radical candidates who could effectively counter the Conservatives offensive on factory reform. The main Liberal candidate and the member for the borough from 1832 until his death in 1841 was Ellis Cunliffe Lister. He had the credentials of an industrialist owning a number of spinning mills in Manningham and Bradford; but was first and foremost a landowner and country squire, managing the Manningham Hall estates with further lands at Addingham and indulging in the passions of the rural aristocracy:

> Mr Lister keeps one of the best packs of harriers I know of, unless they are those of my friend Mr Slingsby. He hunts generally in Wharfedale about Bolton Bridge but occasionally in the neighbourhood of Bradford...[82]

Bradford was not threatened by the possibility of local aristocratic interference as was the case in Sheffield. Instead, Lister and Busfeild, despite their industrial credentials acted almost as a surrogate landed aristocracy and had retreated to their estates on the edge of the borough. Lister was a member of the Whig-Anglican establishment and thus whilst appealing to a number of the moderate middle classes could not capture the whole-hearted support of the liberal or radical activists. Lister's ambivalence towards the non-conformist community distanced him from the bulk of the Liberals in the town, which by 1851 was one of the major nonconformist towns in the country. For example, the Wesleyan Methodists, the most popular of the dissenting sects could challenge the established Church's pre-eminence on both the size of congregations and the numbers of places of worship.[83] Lister made few attempts to appeal for the support of the non-electors. His speeches at the hustings and during campaigns were always brief and usually concerned

[82] Simpson, *The Diary of Dr. John Simpson*, p. 38.

[83] J A Jowitt, 'The pattern of religion in Victorian Bradford' in Jowitt and Wright, *Victorian Bradford*, pp. 37–62.

with economic and fiscal policies — reducing duties on wool, abolishing monopolies and attacking the powers of the Bank of England — rather than addressing issues of social or political reform. He was bitterly attacked by the Tories for refusing to give any direct aid to the unemployed during a downturn in trade in the winter of 1836–7, instead offering to employ men to dig on his estate up to the value of one hundred pounds. When the Tories could point to the paternalistic policies of Bull, Wood and Oastler, Lister's meagre efforts looked paltry in comparison:

> Then look to the Liberals who are your employers. Who have been the first to reduce your wages? Who have led the way and dragged others with them? Did not the chief supporters of Lister? Ay, they did: and now you will shout for them? Well then, shout away. Shout for Lister who promised to spend £100 — on what? On you? No! But on his own estate for himself — all for your benefit — of course![84]

Lister was a moderate, and as such could deliver the votes of the Whig and occasionally the Tory establishment. However, the Bradford Liberals aspired to return a true radical, who could present the views of the nonconformists; the new bourgeois industrialists and those seeking far-reaching political reform. Several initiatives were made to secure that objective. The most enduring was the establishment of the *Bradford Observer* in 1834 to articulate the message of the liberal dissenters in the town. The paper was to be managed and financed by dissenters; there were initially eighty shareholders subscribing twenty-five pounds each.[85] In a letter to William Byles, who was to become the first editor of the newspaper, the characteristics of the town were outlined:

> ...you know the *Leeds Mercury* — that is a fair specimen of the spirit and taste prevailing in that neighbourhood. As in most manufacturing districts the bulk of property and influence is in the hands of enterprising tradesmen; a Liberal feeling prevails — persons are not known merely for having a title — or despised for being tradesmen or dissenters...[86]

The paper did not have a wide circulation, but, as the only serious paper in the town articulated a particular brand of nonconformist radicalism

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[84] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/69. Tory campaign poster.

[85] Byles MSS, 9D77/5. 29 October 1833, B Godwin to E Copley.

[86] *Ibid.*, E Copley to W Byles. See also, D James, 'William Byles and the *Bradford Observer*' in Jowitt and Wright, *Victorian Bradford*, pp. 115–136.

which eventually brought triumph at the polls. Byles and the *Observer* played a major role in the election of the radical free trader, Colonel Perronet Thompson in 1847 and in the efforts to secure for Bradford a charter of incorporation. However, although Byles was attacked by the Tories for being 'a second Neddy Baines' he did not spearhead the radicals' campaigns in the eighteen-thirties and so the foundation of the paper was of long-term rather than immediate significance.[87]

A second initiative was in the formation of the Bradford Reform Society in February 1837 by a number of the leading radicals in the town. Its aim was to complement rather than to supplant local Liberal party organisation, but the emphasis was on securing the election of '*truly* Liberal members' to counter the whiggishness of Lister.[88] The Reform Society also undertook to canvass electors, to promote radical opinions and to counter the effects of bribery and corruption in the borough elections. The society issued its own addresses and was instrumental in the selection of William Busfeild as a partner for Lister in the 1837 election after investigating all alternatives. However, the society failed in its attempts to advance the cause of radicalism in the borough. Busfeild was a major landowner with estates at Bingley, was married to the daughter of Charles Wood and thus was a member of the inner circle of West Riding Whiggery. The alternative candidate also had few radical credentials being W R Stansfield of Esholt Hall, who was, like Lister and Busfeild a prominent local landowner. Stansfield and Busfeild could not even claim the industrial credentials of Lister and thus for the decade following 1832, Bradford was represented by men who would not have found problems in securing their candidatures for seats of the unreformed Parliaments.[89]

[87] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/25. 23 June 1837, Tory campaign poster.

[88] Bradford Archives, DB 4, case 1, number 2. Proceedings of the Bradford Reform Society.

[89] Until 1851 none of the Bradford MPs resided in the town; all owning estates on the periphery.

The Whigs and radicals formed an uneasy alliance throughout the 1830s and this lack of genuine unity scuppered the chances of the only true radical to stand, George Hadfield, in 1835. Hadfield was from Manchester and had led the Manchester dissenters' successful struggle against the payment of church rates in 1834. He was an activist on dissenting issues and in 1833 had written a letter to the *Leeds Mercury* calling for the disestablishment of the Church of England, which had been widely circulated round the district.[90] The Tories made much of the fact that Hadfield was not a local man and his views on religion enabled them to resurrect the cry of 'the church in danger' which had proved so successful for the party a century or so before. It was the coolness of Lister and his refusal to campaign on a joint ticket with Hadfield that fatally undermined the radicals' initiative. In fact, Lister only launched his campaign four days before the election and then refused to endorse Hadfield, reserving his fire for the Tories.[91] Hadfield was vanquished and the magnitude of his defeat must certainly have contributed to the failure to bring forward any further radical, or even liberal, candidates until 1847. Hadfield's defeat was placed by his committee firmly at the feet of the disunited party, calling it:

> ...unsettled and disunited, except on one point, to eject Mr Hardy, if possible from his present situation, but they cannot agree the choice of candidate. On this point, it appears to us that the Reformers are divided into three classes — 1. Those of whom we are representatives, who are ardently and unalterably attached to you [Hadfield]; who would shrink from no exertion, tremble at no danger, regard no obloquy to achieve the object of their ambition. 2. Those who are indifferent as to the candidate, who would support anyone who would vote with Mr Lister and who could unite the reformers. (These two classes comprise about three-fourths of the Liberal constituency) and 3. Those arrogant and malevolent spirits, who through feelings of wounded pride or mortified ambition supported Mr Hardy at the last election; men who would rather sacrifice their principles than their passions, and who, such is the vindictive state of their minds (although they have strongly expressed their disgust at Mr Hardy's parliamentary conduct) would rather be found again voting for him than that you should be returned as the representative of the borough...[92]

[90] *Leeds Mercury*, 9 November 1833.

[91] Wright, 'Politics and Opinion in Nineteenth century Bradford', p. 133.

[92] Byles MSS, 9D77/7. December 1835. Robert Milligan et al to George Hadfield.

In order to achieve unity, therefore, the Bradford radicals asked Hadfield to withdraw from further contests and thus ensured the supremacy of the Whigs in the borough for a further twelve years.

The larger boroughs of the West Riding thus quickly established an independent character. Control of the parliamentary representation of these towns was firmly in the hands of local men from the middle class. Aristocratic intervention was non-existent, even where this was theoretically possible. Equally, those lower down the social scale could do little to prevent the formation of Whig-Liberal cartels among the professionals and top industrialists. This domination was never absolute. Although many of the more active radicals in these boroughs were rapidly wooed by the charms of Chartism and direct action; others persevered and were prepared to participate, where possible, in parliamentary elections. Buckingham, for example, retained his popularity amongst the wider section of Sheffield public opinion, long after his sparkle had worn off for the leading Whigs in the town. In spite of Hadfield's poor showing on polling day; the radicals' pressure on the Whig groups in Bradford, ensured his nomination in the face of concerted opposition. It is in these larger urban constituencies that the essence of conservative, propertied middle class opinion can be found. Tory radicalism which was so successful in the smaller, factory constituencies of the north made little headway in the larger industrial boroughs. In Sheffield, the question was hardly relevant and thus the Tories struggled to uncover a distinct party political agenda in the face of the cautious conservatism of the leading Whig group in the town. In constituencies such as Bradford and Leeds, the Tories made some capital out of the factory reform question but failed to sustain their challenge in the face of the conservatism of the post-reform electorates. Radicalism, in all its many political guises, failed to establish any headway in these constituencies. The eighteen-thirties, can therefore be depicted in these constituencies as a decade of middle class, contentment, consolidation and control.

Chapter VI

Three Faces of Deference — The Borough Electorate

It is not surprising that the 1832 Reform Act did not obliterate patronage at one stroke — even if that had been the intention of the authors of the Act. As late as the nineteen-fifties, the selection of a Conservative candidate for a by-election in Derbyshire had to be delayed until the Duke of Devonshire had returned from abroad and could approve the choice.[1] What is interesting though, is that the Act was the agent that *introduced* patronage into the new borough constituencies. The survival of natural or family influence was viewed as fundamental by most members of the Whig and Tory establishment and was a crucial factor in the lengthy process of getting the bill through Parliament.[2] Therefore many of the infant boroughs were established using the existing pattern rather than — as the members of Political Unions and those newly enfranchised by the Act obviously hoped — a new template in which influence would have a less prominent role. Of the boroughs that survived the Reform Act's axe, a substantial proportion were proprietary boroughs and thus influence, deference and manipulation were certain to remain central features of borough politics.[3]

In the West Riding boroughs, the outlook was mixed for the virgin electors after 1832. (See Table 6.1) It is not safe to assume that the boroughs that survived the reform process would be more likely to

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[1] This was the selection of Aiden Cawley in the by-election of 1954. *The Times*, 6 February 1954.

[2] Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, pp. 242–63.

[3] Gash estimates that there were fifty two returning seventy two members. Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 438–9.

be subject to proprietor influence and those new boroughs would be independent.

Table 6.1 Influence and the West Riding boroughs.[4]

Borough	*Pre–1832*	*Interests*	*1832*	*1833–41*
Bradford	N/A	None	Open	Open
Halifax	N/A	Wood	Influence	Influence
Huddersfield	N/A	Ramsden	Proprietary	Proprietary
Knaresborough	Proprietary	Devonshire	Open	Influence
Leeds	N/A	None	Open	Open
Pontefract	Proprietary	Galway/Savile	Patronage	Patronage
Ripon	Proprietary	Lawrence	Patronage	Proprietary
Sheffield	N/A	None	Open	Open
Wakefield	N/A	Lascelles	Open	Influence

Attempting to calculate the 'independence' or otherwise of parliamentary constituencies is a high-risk occupation as previous practitioners have found to their cost.[5] There are subtle variations between influence, patronage and proprietary boroughs. Influence refers to boroughs where an interest or interests can be uncovered with evidence that it is utilised; but where such influence is not the controlling force within the constituency. Patronage boroughs are where a family or number of families control the representation of the borough to the extent that they can return one MP for the constituency year in, year out. However, the second seat, where applicable may be open to the free choices of the electorate. Finally proprietary boroughs are where the constituency is under the close control of a patron or patrons.

[4] Sources: O'Gorman, *Voters, Parties and Patrons*, pp. 41–58; Thorne (ed.), *History of Parliament*, volume 1, pp. 450–458; Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*; Dod, *Electoral Facts*; Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, pp. 792–1103.

[5] See for example, O'Gorman's critique of Namier in *Voters, Parties and Patrons*, pp. 19–22 and Phillips' of Gash in *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, pp. 25–6.

The situation was not written in stone and constantly changed. Those boroughs under the close, proprietary control of a patron one year may: assert their independence; be passed on to the control of an alternative patron; or be subjected to a tug-o-war competition between conflicting interests; the next. In Knaresborough, for instance the Reform Act saw the end of the influence of the Duke of Devonshire who prior to the 1832 Reform Act had owned a major proportion of the burgage properties.[6] The Devonshire influence was still a feature of the political tapestry of the town but the Slingsby interest, dominant in the early eighteenth century was revived by the inclusion, in the new parliamentary borough, of part of Scriven township, their country seat.[7] However, by 1841 this outside aristocratic influence was being replaced by landlord influence from within the town. Around a quarter of the voters of Knaresborough by 1838 were so-called 'cow-house' voters. There was a large amount of pasture land surrounding the market town of Knaresborough and this had been absorbed into the new parliamentary constituency in an attempt to counter the effect of the burgage voters, who had been under the control of the Duke of Devonshire and were now influenced by Slingsby. Some unscrupulous owners of this pasture land divided it into ten pound blocks for the purpose of creating votes which they would then control. Often the only buildings on these plots of land would be barns or animal sheds. By the end of the eighteen-thirties the Collins family owned and rented-out around half of these 'cow-house' votes and the family controlled a substantial number of voters until the eighteen-sixties.[8] The tactic of creating 'cow-house' voters was one adopted by Elizabeth Lawrence in Ripon after the voters' rebellion of 1832.[9]

[6] Thorne (ed.), *History of Parliament*, volume 1, pp. 450–2.

[7] Dod, *Electoral Facts*, p. 169.

[8] Jennings (ed.), *A History of Harrogate and Knaresborough*, pp. 357–65.

[9] See Chapter IV.

The smaller new boroughs created by the Reform Act, such as Huddersfield and Wakefield were also liable to come under the influence of aristocratic patrons. In 1700 Wakefield was the chief woollen town of the West Riding and only second to Leeds in cloth production. However, by the eighteen-thirties the trade had suffered a rapid decline and the town's output of woollen goods — including the tammies, a woollen cloth which was a speciality of the town — languished behind Bradford, Halifax, Leeds and Keighley.[10] This has largely been attributed to the actions of the manufacturers themselves:

> ...the aristocracy of Wakefield, who had already made their fortunes, refused to permit mills or factories to be established here; they were well content to ride in their carriages and fours, and attend the markets in other towns, but would not have manufactures bought to Wakefield. Indeed they went so far as to have inserted in the indentures of apprenticeship [in 1815], that that those thus bound should not exercise their trade within seven miles of Wakefield. This sent the manufacturers to Leeds and then they were required not to establish themselves within ten miles of Wakefield, and so Bradford grew great and important. It was, however but a short-sighted policy, for after a while they removed from the town, and left poor Wakefield to itself without its aristocracy, and without the manufacturing wealth and importance which otherwise would have remained here.[11]

The gentrification of the Wakefield textile merchants was reflected by the mercantile class in Leeds. For example, the proportion of firms associated with textile production in Leeds fell from fifty-eight per cent in 1759 to just fourteen per cent in 1834.[12] In Wakefield however, unlike its close neighbour, the town was not able to diversify into other industries and develop differing economic interests and trade in the nineteenth century began to ossify. Part of the explanation for this economic stagnation lies in the expansion of Wakefield's status as the civil, administrative and political capital of the West Riding. A

[10] By 1830, Bradford was producing seven times as much wool as Wakefield. Firth, 'The Bradford trade in the nineteenth century', p. 10.

[11] Reverend C E Camidge cited in Walker, *Wakefield: Its History and its People*, volume 2, p. 398. See also, R G Wilson, 'The supremacy of the Yorkshire cloth industry in the eighteenth-century' in N B Harte and K G Ponting (eds), *Textile History and Economic History: Essays in Honour of Miss J. de Lacy Mann* (Manchester, 1973), pp. 225–46.

[12] R G Wilson, *Gentleman Merchants: The Merchant Community in Leeds, 1700–1830* (Manchester, 1971), p. 133.

second factor is the fact that like Sheffield, Wakefield retained many of the trappings of its medieval market town past. The privilege of the Soke — the power of the lord of the manor to compel the inhabitants of the town to have their corn ground at the Soke mill — continued in the town until 1854, after an Act of Parliament was passed allowing the town to free itself from this obligation at a cost of £18,000.[13] It did not receive a charter of incorporation until 1848 and thus, in the first half of the nineteenth century remained a curious blend of market town, county capital and industrial municipality. This fact was noticed by the parliamentary commissioners who reported to the Commons on the new boroughs established by the 1832 Reform Act:

> The present condition of Wakefield is not flourishing; its principal manufacturers having left it; in its commerce in grain, the town received a few years since, a shock from the failure of a bank, from which it has never recovered. It is still a very substantial and well conditioned town, and a considerable market for corn, wool and cattle...[14]

The schizophrenic character of the town affected its political development. For the decade after 1832, the town's parliamentary representation was dominated by a titanic struggle between Daniel Milnes Gaskell and William Sebright Lascelles. Gaskell was a personification of the gentleman merchant. He lived at Lupset Hall on the outskirts of the town and was related through marriage to the Milnes family who owned extensive textile, banking and commercial property in the town. Gaskell was not directly involved in trade, however, and lived the life of a paternalist landowner, offering money to the town for the establishment of public baths, hospitals and non-denominational schools.[15] A presentation to Gaskell by seventeen hundred electors and non-electors of Wakefield, after his defeat by Lascelles in 1837, praised 'his honourable demeanour as a gentleman, his liberal contributions to the public charities of the borough and his bounteous private benefactions to the poor and distressed... his

[13] Walker, *Wakefield*, volume 2, pp. 519–20.

[14] *Wakefield and Halifax Journal*, 30 March 1832.

[15] J Goodchild, *Daniel Gaskell, 1782–1875* (Wakefield, 1975), p. 3.

unflinching patriotism and enlightened liberal policies'.[16] Gaskell was never a 'party' man though and took pride in his assertion that 'I never sacrificed to any party that which belonged to my own conscience and the rights of my countrymen'.[17] Lascelles was a member of the foremost Tory political family of the West Riding, the son of the Earl of Harewood and using these connections represented the manorial interests in the town. Lascelles took as his agent, Jose Luis Fernandes, miller of the Soke mill in the town and representative of the Earl of Strafford and Sir Thomas Pilkington, who both owned estates encircling the town.

The town was evenly split between the two parties but lined up behind the two interests of trade and land. The merchants and manufacturers overwhelmingly supported Gaskell and the Liberals, whilst the non-industrial trades and professionals backed Lascelles. The closeness of the contests encouraged careful management on both sides. In 1832, for example, James Milnes Gaskell the nephew of Daniel had canvassed the town. However, his youth — he was only twenty-one at the time of the election — was considered to be a hindrance and he was persuaded to stand down. He petulantly attributed this to:

> ...a party small in numbers, but indefatigable in zeal — long accustomed to take a very active part on public occasions — and long accustomed to dictate to the town...[18]

This zealous 'party', referred to the mercantile interests of the town who deferred to his cousins, the Milnes' family. Daniel Gaskell was considered to be a safer pair of hands and moreover, the representation of the town could be retained in the family.

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[16] *Report of the Proceedings on the Presentation of Two Pieces of Plate to Daniel Gaskell esq.* (Wakefield, 1838).

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Gaskell MSS. *Letter from Milnes Gaskell esq. to the Chairman of his committee.*

Lascelles was backed by the social, financial and political clout of his family and his connections. He could also draw on the facilities of the Carlton Club in London. He sat on the management committee of the club in 1835. This endorsement, proved to be double-edged, however, when his defeat in 1841 was attributed to his disputes with the club in London. Richard Monckton Milnes, a close neighbour of Lascelles wrote to Peel that:

> My friend William Lascelles has lost his election and the party a vote in consequence of that political scullery, the Carlton Club, and the stupid violence of party newspapers. The Tories at Wakefield had been made to believe that he had deserted his profession and would take no pains about his return...[19]

Both parties used stunts in order to attempt to secure their election. At the 1835 hustings 'a negro boy mounted on a poor lean palfrey was led through the crowd and placed in front of the candidates'.[20] This was a reference to the Earl of Harewood's employment of slaves. The Tories, in the same election, also employed some dubious methods:

> There is great excitement now about the elections. Mr Lascelles has come forward again and his supporters have tried every method of winning over Mr Gaskell's adherents. Amongst other methods, they gave a 'tea-drinking' last Monday to some 4,000 women and there was all kinds of drunkenness attendant on it. It is acknowledged that victory is very uncertain and both parties are trembling about results...[21]

Although, there were allegations of corruption on both sides, it appears that the constituency was equally divided and the parties were driven to use unorthodox methods of electioneering out of sheer desperation.[22] In the three contests between 1835 and 1841 the distance between the rival groups ranged from twenty-six to fifty-seven votes,

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[19] Richard Monckton Milnes to Robert Peel cited in N Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 400.

[20] H Clarkson, *Memories of Merry Wakefield* (Wakefield, 1887), p. 191.

[21] A K Jacques (ed.), *Merrie Wakefield: Diary of Clara Clarkson, 1811–89 of Alverthorpe Hall, Wakefield* (Wakefield, 1971), p. 98.

[22] For example, it was stated that Gaskell had been defeated by 'bribery in the grossest and most flagrant form, intimidation in the most severe and trying circumstances, the base recreancy of some and the vile perfidy of others...'. *Report of the Proceedings on the Presentation of Two Pieces of Plate.*

with Gaskell and Lascelles securing two victories apiece. Wakefield's attempt to mark its independence from landed influence struggled throughout the eighteen-thirties was encumbered by the fact that the powerful Tory interest in the town allied with the party's aristocratic grandees. The town's Liberal newspaper in 1832 eschewed the Lascelles' interference:

> The clear political atmosphere of Wakefield would not agree with one who had vegetated in the mists and woods of Harewood. Daniel Gaskell has the undisputed occupation of the field...[23]

Events were to prove this brave statement otherwise. The aristocratic attention, in connection with the decline of the textile industry and the town's preoccupation with developing its administrative functions, marked out Wakefield from the other West Riding boroughs that had been enfranchised in 1832.

In the larger boroughs, influence was also perceived as a problem. The Leeds 1832 election was, for example, 'a battle of opinion with more than a little influence'.[24] In Sheffield, the knowledge that the two leading Whig landowners in the vicinity, the Duke of Norfolk and Earl Fitzwilliam, were holders of the proprietary boroughs of Arundel, Horsham, Malton and Peterborough, raised fears that they might take an unhealthy interest in the town. James Silk Buckingham, a radical candidate in the 1832 election warned the electorate against adopting two local men as their MPs because of the danger of aristocratic interference in the choice of representatives for the town. Although, in fairness, this was probably a device to secure his own election, as an outsider in the contest! Yet, despite the fears of the electors and allegations of illegal interference, the independent nature of these large electorates ensured that they remained impervious to influence.[25]

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[23] *Wakefield and Halifax Journal*, 25 May 1832.

[24] Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, p. 127.

[25] See Chapter V.

The definition of influence is all important to this analysis. The dilemma is illustrated by this account of the views of General Dalbiac a candidate in the 1832 Ripon election:

> In his address to the electors, General Dalbiac, disclaimed distinctly on the part of himself, and as distinctly deprecated on the part of all other persons, any desire to influence electors to vote by undue means and contrary to their own consciences and interests. He pointed out that throughout the country, high, low, rich and poor, whigs and tories, reformers and anti-reformers, voters and non-voters, men and women, were exerting all their influence to bring others to their political thinking, and to the interests of their own favoured candidates preparatory to the general election. This influence — which he described as a legitimate influence — he admitted having courted among all classes in the borough on behalf of his colleague and himself. He had never heard of any person being proscribed with respect to the exercise of that influence; he had seen no list published of persons against whom the privilege was interdicted. Why then was an exception to be taken to the proprietor of Studley Park. Had the proprietor of Studley Park so little connection with the borough of Ripon, and so little stake in the country, as to be in nowise entitled to entertain an interest with respect to its representation in Parliament. Had Miss Lawrence conferred so few benefits on this borough, and had the town of Ripon been so little admitted within the pale of her liberalities, that she alone was to be precluded from the exercise of the same influence which every other individual in the town and neighbourhood was, (more or less) exercising without control. Or was it that an utter extinction was to be put upon all influence derivable from property and from station, from character and from beneficence? If the exercise of influence from Mrs [sic] Lawrence was unconstitutional, it was equally unconstitutional in all others who exercised it, by however inferior gradations.[26]

Thus the definition of when influence is legitimate electioneering practice and when it is illegal interference is a very grey area and one which is almost impossible to unravel in some constituencies. However, in Ripon, despite General Dalbiac's eloquence, it is clear that Miss Lawrence's concern with the voting patterns of the inhabitants of the city was often far from benevolent. Deference in the West Riding boroughs exhibited itself in various guises as these case studies of three, very different, constituencies illustrates.

[26] Staveley MSS, DD115/26.

Pontefract — deference versus corruption

Pontefract had been regarded as a maverick borough throughout the eighteenth century.[27] It had been subject to the influence of competing interests, including the Moncktons of Cavil and Holroyd; the Winns of Nostell; the Lowthers of Swillington; the Blands of Kippax Park; the Dawnays of Crowicke; the Lascelles of Harewood and the Saviles of Rufford Park.[28] This formidable array of patronal power, not to mention their access to considerable amounts of money[29], ensured that the constituency was regularly contested throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[30] However, Pontefract's electoral history was not a straightforward one of baronial in-fighting. Despite the vast amounts of money on offer, a number of burgages remained under the control of individual proprietors. In 1768 these independent electors put forward their own candidate in opposition to the efforts of a new burgage proprietor, John Walsh, to introduce new management techniques to the borough.[31] The candidate of the small proprietors was in fact, far from being a disinterested bystander; they selected Sir Rowland Winn of nearby Nostell. He was one of the richest landowners in the West Riding and himself owned forty burgages in Pontefract. The election of 1768 was however, fought on the rights of independent, *local* men against the 'illegal' interference of distant

[27] For more information see J F Quinn, 'The Parliamentary Constituencies of Yorkshire from the Accession of Anne to the Fall of Walpole', (unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Lancaster, 1979); Bradley, 'The Parliamentary Representation of the Boroughs of Pontefract, Newark and East Retford', volume 1; and the Thorne (ed.), *History of Parliament*, volume 1, pp. 454–7.

[28] Bradley, 'Parliamentary Representation', volume 1, pp. 10–11 and Thorne (ed.), *History of Parliament*, volume 1, pp. 454–7.

[29] For example, Lord Pollington spent over £13,000 in the election contests of 1812 and 1818 and Lascelles election victory in 1812 cost him over £5,000. Thorne (ed.), *History of Parliament*, volume 1, p. 457.

[30] Pontefract was contested 15 times (out of a possible 26 contests) between 1708 and 1831. Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, p. 289.

[31] Walsh had purchased the Pontefract burgages from the Pitt family for £16,000. Bradley, 'Parliamentary Representation of the Boroughs of Pontefract, Newark and East Retford', volume 1, p. 34.

landowners. The main demand of the small burgesses was that the franchise of the borough should be restored to that of inhabitant householders, which had been the original franchise, although the Commons had decided in 1699 and again in 1715 in favour of a burgage franchise. Winn was elected at the head of the poll in 1768 but unseated on petition on the grounds of public disturbances. The main demand of the independent voters was eventually conceded, after fifteen years of petitions and disruption, when the Commons affirmed the inhabitant householder franchise in 1783.[32]

There was a further dimension to the electoral representation of Pontefract though and this confirmed its maverick reputation. In several elections, the established interests were subject to challenges by outside candidates, often at the last minute and usually with no local connections and thus no conceivable hope of success. These candidates sometimes claimed that they had been brought to Pontefract on false pretences, sometimes alleged trickery and were occasionally genuine, hoping to secure victory on the grounds of being independent outsiders. The hoax candidates — one being a gingerbread seller who dressed up as Sir George Wombwell and issued an election address in his name — added to Pontefract's unsavoury reputation of being a borough where copious quantities of money and drink abounded at election time and anyone wishing to join in the merriment was welcome.

After 1832 the three competing threads that made up the rich tapestry of Pontefract's representation continued. The interests of the great landowners were personified by Richard Monckton Milnes and Viscount Pollington. The views of the 'independent' voters were voiced by Richard Gully and Sir Culling Eardley Smith. Bribery, corruption and hoax candidatures were also rife, a particularly

[32] The narrative of events surrounding the 1768 election and its aftermath is given detailed coverage in Bradley, 'The Parliamentary Representation of the Boroughs of Pontefract, Newark and East Retford', pp. 55–91.

notorious case being that of Henry Gompertz in 1837. Although Pontefract's notoriety was well known in Parliament, the borough retained its two members after 1832. However, in a bid to diminish the corruption, the boundaries of the constituency were increased from 4.2 to 11.9 square miles.[33] The Pontefract electorate was thus increased to nine hundred and thirty-four voters after 1832. However, only 17.7 per cent of the electorate came from the surrounding towns and villages which made up the new constituency.[34] Despite this increase, which almost doubled the pre-reform electorate, bribery and corruption continued. Its implementation was eased by the rapid falling off of numbers of voters during the eighteen-thirties. Thus, by 1840 there were only seven hundred and twenty-two voters on the electoral register, presumably due to the death or removal of electors claiming under the pre–1832 franchise.[35]

By the eighteen-thirties the struggles for control between competing magnates had settled down. The major influence came from members of the families of two Irish peers, Viscount Galway and the Earl of Mexborough. Viscount Galway had ended his direct interest in the borough in 1796, but retained his property and thus his influence. The Galway's connection with the borough was continued however, passing to a minor branch of the family, the Monckton Milnes of Fryston, near Ferrybridge. The Milnes' interest was enhanced by the inclusion of Ferrybridge in the new parliamentary constituency of Pontefract after 1832. Robert Pemberton Milnes represented the borough from 1806 to 1818 and his son, Richard Monckton Milnes from 1837 to 1863. The Galway interest was now mobilised in favour of his cousins but the steward of his Pontefract properties, Michael

[33] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 433.

[34] The figures are as follows: Carlton (13 voters); Ferrybridge (34); Knottingley (94); Pontefract (736 — of which 537 had their right of voting preserved by the 1832 Act); Pontefract Park (2) and Tanshelf (22). *Leeds Mercury*, 17 November 1832.

[35] Houghton MSS, E2/1. Table of Pontefract votes, 1834–40.

Mitton, kept him informed of the activities of his tenants. In 1841, for example, he wrote attaching a list of Galway's tenants, all of whom had voted for Milnes, except five with crosses by their names:

> ... two voted last time for Milnes, as to the other three they should be discharged as they are obstinate enemies...[36]

Thus Galway, maintained a sporadically active concern in the affairs of the borough. Relations between the Monckton Milnes and the Saviles were not always cordial. Although both families represented the Conservative party and would often co-operate[37]; this collaboration rarely existed when both families were contesting the seat. On these occasions, Lord Pollington, the Savile's candidate, arrogantly ensured that Richard Monckton Milnes was aware of his junior rank and status. In the election of 1841 for example, although Milnes was the sitting MP, he was obliged to write to Pollington and enquire firstly, if Pollington intended to stand and secondly, if that was the case whether he considered that two Conservative candidates would have a chance of election. Pollington's reply, although in the affirmative to both points emphasised his superior claims to the constituency. He questioned the ability and integrity of Milnes' agent and hinted that should a Whig candidate stand against them, Milnes' votes would be more likely to be compromised than would his:

> Your letter has arrived this morning — I believe the present feeling of Pontefract is strong enough to return two Conservatives, provided you and I be the candidates, and that we are true to each other. In respect to this I must say that I cannot place the same reliance on your agent as I can on your Father and yourself. My first question to my agent was, can you in the event of my standing answer for success. His reply was I never felt so confident. My answer was, would my success endanger Mr Milnes. In answer to this he shewed me the registry list — pointing out those who would vote for us both, those who would either plump or vote for both as requested by their respective friends and those who would certainly vote for our opponent, but might be disposed to give one of us a vote. If his

[36] Nottingham University Library, Galway MSS. Ga C1/84. Michael Mitton to Viscount Galway.

[37] This co-operation extended for example, to Mexborough handing over to Richard Monckton Milnes a copy of his canvass book for 1832 and 1835, in order to assist Milnes' campaign in 1837. Houghton MSS. E1/1 Copy register of electors and summary of votes.

> statement be correct, by ordinary management our joint return is sure — but who will oppose. I also believe that you would divide more votes that I should with the Whig candidate...[38]

Pollington also wrote to Galway, passing over the Milnes, requesting his support to ensure that there would not be a contest in Pontefract.[39] The Milnes' exasperation with the activities of Pollington — and indeed, the whole family — is illustrated by this letter from their agent (and Galway's steward) to Viscount Galway in 1841,

> ...Lady Mexborough has personally returned thanks to, and called at every individual voter's house — so that Mrs Milnes will be under the necessity of doing the same...[40]

Both Milnes and Pollington, representing the new generation of their respective families, displayed a certain arrogance to the sensibilities of the Pontefract electorate, often making little attempt to appeal to the voters on *political* grounds, preferring the attractions of their tours of the continent. In 1837, the *Leeds Mercury*, reported on the nomination proceedings at Pontefract:

> ...Milnes gave a long speech, which amounted to nothing. He entered into a long romance about a tour of the continent but gave no other proposals...[41]

In 1835, Pollington had gone one better. Despite there being two other candidates contesting the election, Pollington did not consider it necessary to be present — or even in England — for the contest:

> We hope Lord Pollington will be home in time for the fight — he only knew of his election by a newspaper and did not feel happy at turning his back on Greece and Palestine to come home as the colleague of Gully![42]

Perhaps it was this contumacious attitude on the part of Milnes and Pollington that encouraged the independent sections of the borough

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[38] Houghton MSS, E2–3. 4 June 1841, Lord Pollington to Richard Monckton Milnes.

[39] Galway MSS. Ga C1/85–6. Lord Pollington to Viscount Galway.

[40] *Ibid.*, Ga C1/84.

[41] *Leeds Mercury*, 22 July 1837.

[42] Lister MSS. Letter 834, 10 February 1835, Lady Stuart de Rothesay to Anne Lister. Lady Stuart de Rothesay was a cousin of the Earl of Mexborough. A correspondent of the *Leeds Mercury* noted bitterly, 'Raphael and Pollington are said to be confident. It would be a pity to recall the Tory lord from his travels...'. *Leeds Mercury*, 3 January 1835.

to revive their challenge to the established interests. The rhetoric surrounding the passage of the Reform Act must, however, also bear some responsibility. The electorate of Pontefract — echoing the views of the voters of their neighbour, Ripon — believed that the Reform Act had empowered them to question undue aristocratic influence. In the election of 1832 the popular candidate was John Gully, a wealthy race-course owner with a dubious past history that included trading as a butcher and inn keeper and success as a prize fighter.[43] Gully, who resided at Ackworth Park was encouraged to stand by a number of public requisitions and was joined on a liberal-radical ticket by Henry Stafford Jerningham, the eldest son of the Earl of Stafford and one of the sitting MPs. The Earl of Mexborough, the other member for the borough made an early election address to the borough but withdrew before the poll. His decision to withdraw was influenced partly by press comment challenging his 'face to coax those *worthy* electors, whom he, by his vote declared unworthy of the franchise'[44]; but conclusively by a canvass he undertook placing him in third place to Gully and Jerningham.[45]

Table 6.2 Mexborough's canvass of Pontefract, 1832.

Declared vote	*£10 householders*	*Pot boilers*	*Total*
Gully and Jerningham	146	136	282
Mexborough	130	168	298
Not promised	18	79	98

Mexborough must have assumed that the electors not declaring a decision in the canvass would support Gully and Jerningham if there

[43] Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, p. 992.

[44] *Leeds Mercury*, 17 November 1832.

[45] Houghton MSS. E1/1 Copy register of electors and summary of votes.

was a poll. In addition, the tide of opinion throughout the country was overwhelmingly in favour of candidates who supported the Reform Act. A family member noted:

> ... Gully has started at Pontefract and is of course firm favourite with all the Ragamuffins, who muster stronger there than anywhere except in Preston. So in fighting the Borough Lord Mexborough has the misfortune of finding himself only supported by all that is reputable in the constituency...[46]

Gully repeated his triumph in 1835, heading the poll. This time, however, his running partner, Raphael could not defeat the Mexborough interest and Lord Pollington became the second member for the borough. In 1837 Gully withdrew and the independent interest was represented by Sir Culling Eardley Smith, who had been a candidate in the borough in 1830. Smith was called upon to stand by a number of residents of the borough calling themselves 'the friends of purity of election' in response to the widespread purchase of votes which had occurred in the 1835 election.[47] A correspondent from the *Leeds Mercury* described his campaign:

> ...the friends of purity of election in Pontefract are at length arousing themselves and endeavouring to wipe away the stains of bribery and corruption which has so long disgraced the borough... Smith told the assembled population the wickedness of that system to which many of them clung... there was no music, no tumult... Many who before could not bring themselves to believe that there was any harm in receiving after the election, three pounds, or three guineas from the members in the name of a present, now feel convinced of their error and support Sir Culling with the greatest enthusiasm... by all events the system by which the electors have suffered themselves to be bought and sold by wholesale and retail is irrevocably condemned; and this, we trust is the last time that any persons, high or low, will insult the persons of this borough by the promise or hint of a bribe, and thus hold Pontefract up as the shame and disgrace of popular constituencies...[48]

In spite of these honourable sentiments and the show of hands which placed Smith at the top of the poll, he received only one hundred and twenty-three votes, some four hundred behind Richard Monckton

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[46] Lister MSS, letter 635. 1 December 1832, Lady Stuart de Rothesay to Anne Lister.

[47] *Leeds Mercury*, 22 July 1837.

[48] *Ibid.*

Milnes who did not share Smith's qualms about paying the voters. The problems the independent candidates faced — of countering both aristocratic *and* monetary influence — was underlined in the contest of 1841. There was again a public petition calling upon Gully to stand as a candidate pledging to return him free of expenses, however the Milnes camp expected him to refuse these requests:

> I have very great pleasure to inform you that Mr Gully has, through his friend Luke Howard, the Quaker, intimated that he is determined not to become a candidate at the approaching election.
>
> A deputation intended waiting upon him with a requisition signed by 84 electors, but on the clear intimation being given it was given up. I have no doubt he had heard what was passing and had too good sense to come forward on a requisition signed by 84 out of 700 electors.
>
> The requisitionists pledged themselves to support him free of expenses which will account partly for the small number of signatures.
>
> He may after all come on the old system and this is only a ruse to put us off our guard... therefore we must not relax our exertions...[49]

Mitton was correct in his suspicions that Gully's refusal to accept the public petition was merely a ruse. Gully did eventually stand in opposition to Milnes and Pollington. However, whether he resorted to using the 'old system' and purchasing his votes is unclear and at the close of poll he was two hundred votes behind the two Conservatives.

The third strand of electoral behaviour in Pontefract was the less laudable one of bribery, corruption and hoax candidates. The existence of bribery as an element in the return of candidates has already been alluded to. Indeed, there seemed little attempt to disguise its existence in either press reports or campaign posters. The *Leeds Mercury* which represented the liberal interests of its editor, Edward Baines, outlined the lamentable practices in Pontefract at the time of Smith's candidature in 1837:

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[49] Houghton MSS, E2/4. 5 June 1841, Michael Mitton junior to Richard Monckton Milnes.

> ...the borough of Pontefract has long held a most humiliating position among the boroughs of the West Riding. The long continued system of the payment of 'head money' by the candidates has led the electors to regard it as a sort of prescriptive right, and hence on the coming forward of any gentleman for the representation of the borough they have been accustomed to regard his claim to their support, not as founded upon any identity of general political sentiment, or upon any coincidence of opinion on abstract questions — or even upon pledges and promises as affecting the local interests of the town — but as grounded upon the extent of the disposition to bribe the electors, and consequently the gain to them by the venality of the practice. The electors hitherto have made the amount of the payment the standard whereby to judge the claims of the candidate. They have not discriminated between the professions and practices of the two great political parties, neither have they weighed the result of those professions in the scale of public opinion in affecting the good government and well being of the community. Content to receive the highest bribe from any party, — viewing the opinions of an individual as entitled to their consideration in proportion only to his disposition to corrupt, and ridiculing even to contempt the professions of those who had the courage to declare their hostility to such a system — the electors of Pontefract have sunk into a state of moral apathy... they have neglected their best interests — have assisted to perpetuate the existence of the selfish Tory faction in the common house of parliament, and hence to render the reform bill inoperative... and have, in short, caused both themselves, and the borough of which they are the constituent part, to be held up to surrounding constituencies as one of the most corrupt bodies of electors of one of the most corrupt boroughs in the kingdom...[50]

Tory campaign posters seeking to contest the substance of Smith's campaign against 'head money' argued that its withdrawal would cause hardship to the Pontefract tenants who were subject to higher rents because of the existence of these payments but did not dispute its existence:

> Sir Culling Eardley Smith also professes his Knowledge of the FACT that the Labouring Poor pay higher Rents from anticipated Head Money, but, 'that this Head Money cannot and will not be paid'
>
> Viz. — that this system must and will be abolished. Its abolition is fervently desired by every disinterested and honest man. But till the system is abolished are the Labouring Poor to be the only sufferers? Which must be the case if the increased Rent is to be paid and the Head Money to cease at once without warning? It was the will of this Nation that the horrid system of West India Slavery should be abolished, but was this done without compensation to the slave holder?
>
> Are then the Poor Labouring Men of Pontefract to be tricked at once out of their accustomed compensation? Abolish the abomination, but injure not the labouring man.

[50] *Leeds Mercury*, 29 July 1837.

Fair play is a jewel!![51]

Richard Monckton Milnes was more cautious in his public addresses and in campaign posters signed by him, he claimed after his electoral success:

> ...I am content with our moderate Victory. There was not only no intimidation, but scarcely a solicitation made on my behalf; not a Tenant will be interfered with by his Landlord; not a Tradesman will lose a single customer on account of my election...[52]

However, in private correspondence between the Milnes family and their agent Michael Mitton it is clear that they condoned and participated in the practice of paying head money to the electorate:

> The outcry is so general for money that there is no alternative but writing altho' I have deferred it for several days in despite of the importunities of Seaton, Jefferson &c. It is becoming, indeed has become, very injurious to your own and son's popularity and is doing for Stanley [William Stanley, a liberal who was second to Milnes in the election]everything he could desire for. I am told that he has paid nearly the whole.
>
> Your son's best friends too, the Plumpers are worse off than those who only gave single votes [sic], because the latter got half from Stanley, and the former nothing from anywhere. It is calculated that to pay what there will be to pay, will require £1500 or nearly that.
>
> Stanley has paid his people without much commotion or publicity, and so of course you must as far as possible; but they all want paying at once <u>now</u>. And it will not be so easy to do as he has found it.
>
> There is a public meeting called by the Mayor tomorrow, to consider what can be done, in the way of setting the men to some public work, and most likely the election money will be brought up by someone. The Members are sure to be appealed to.
>
> It is however, of the utmost consequence both to your electioneering interests and general connection with the town, to satisfy the present pressing claims and I am sure you will do what you can.
>
> M says that Stanley only pays 2 guineas for each vote. I always thought he had paid 3. <u>Three</u> is expected from you he says, because you paid it before and Lord Mexborough 3. It seems optional.[53]

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[51] Houghton MSS, E1/5. 21 July 1837, Conservative campaign poster.

[52] *Ibid.* E1/9. 26 July 1837, Richard Monckton Milnes' campaign poster.

[53] *Ibid.* Uncatalogued political letters to R P Milnes. 18 January 1838, M Mitton to R P Milnes.

There are rarely more obvious examples of candidates purchasing votes and although the Pontefract electorate may go some way to support O'Gorman's conclusions that 'the transfer of money to voters confirmed rather than undermined the relationships arising out of natural interest, paternalism and deference'[54]; it is clear that the existence of these payments buttressed the citadels of aristocratic influence and prevented the electorate from exercising a free choice in contests. Indeed, in spite of the customary nature of these payments, Richard Monckton Milnes and his family were unnerved by a petition from Sir Culling Eardley Smith calling for a select committee to be appointed to inquire into the practice of paying head money at elections in Pontefract. Smith freely admitted to paying head money in his previous attempt at election for the borough in 1830 and argued that the reduction in his support (from five hundred and thirty votes to one hundred and twenty-three) was entirely due to the fact that he had publicly stated that he would not pay 'head money'.[55] An analysis of the poll illustrates that Smith received the greater part of his support from the ten pound householders rather than the so-called pot boilers — the inhabitant householders who benefited from the 1783 change in the franchise. The inhabitant householders were remnants of the pre–1832 electorate and thus expected payment.[56]

[54] O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 160.

[55] Houghton MSS, E1/13. 13 February 1837, petition by Sir Culling Eardley Smith with annotations by Richard Monckton Milnes.

[56] *Ibid.* E1/1. Copy register of electors.

Table 6.3 An analysis of the poll, Pontefract, 1837.

Vote	*£10 householders*	*Pot boilers*	*Total*
Milnes	138	106	244
Milnes and Smith	20	2	22
Milnes and Stanley	59	182	241
Smith	9	1	10
Stanley	12	60	72
Stanley and Smith	69	24	93
Did not vote	54	8	62

In all combinations Smith received more votes from the ten pound householders; whilst Stanley and Milnes, of whom there is documentary evidence that they paid head money, generally received more support from the pot boilers. Hasty annotations to a copy of Smith's petition by Richard Monckton Milnes demonstrate the defence that he was preparing against Smith's allegations:

> Summary
>
> 1. Smith no great one
>
> 2. Smith's influence diminishing
>
> 3. Ballot no effect
>
> 4. I made no promises[57]

Milnes' father even went so far as to appeal to Francis Barker, the man who nominated Smith. He received short shrift:

> ...I feel obliged by the kindly tone of your letter and under the circumstances would have given you my opinion unreservedly but Sir Culling Smith being about to bring the subject of corruption as existing among the voters of Pontefract before the House of Commons (which the paper given to Mr Mitton will have informed you) I should consider it indecorous and improper to obtrude my views upon you — your own good judgement will be your best adviser...[58]

[57] *Ibid.* E1/13. 13 February 1837, petition by Sir Culling Eardley Smith with annotations by Richard Monckton Milnes.

[58] *Ibid.* Uncatalogued political letters to R P Milnes. 2 February 1838, F Barker to R P Milnes.

In the event, however, perhaps because Smith admitted complicity on previous occasions or because this was the second petition regarding the 1837 election, the petition was ordered by the House of Commons to lie on the table and to be printed.[59]

There was one hoax candidate in the election campaigns of the eighteen-thirties. In the highly eventful 1837 election campaign a Londoner named Henry Gompertz entered the contest in the Conservative interest on nomination day:

> The candidates on the Tory side were Mr Richard Monckton Milnes, son of Robert Pemberton Milnes esq., of Fryston (a gentleman who formerly paid 'head money' as the price of the representation of Pontefract) and Henry Gompertz of No. 3, Portland Place, London, a gentleman of 'conservative principles' but a 'real and not a mock reformer'. The address of the latter candidate, which only reached Pontefract on Saturday, announced his inability, from a severe domestic calamity, to pay his respects to the electors but stated that his son would leave London on Sunday to solicit their suffrages on his behalf. The Tories, however... received his advances with a certain degree of shyness. Some persons seemed to think (and one or two lawyers among them) that he was a 'Destructive' attempting to sail into Parliament under false colours, and that it would not be prudent to place implicit reliance on the declarations of the son, seeing that like another 'Jim Crow' or 'Westminster's glory' he might 'wheel about, turn about and do just so'. In short, Mr Gompertz and his address were laughed at, as a piece of modest assurance, for which even the electors of Pontefract were too far north. There were, therefore, only three candidates personally in the field...[60]

The suspicions of the electorate, the Conservative camp and the press were that this was a spoof candidacy and that Gompertz would withdraw before the poll. However, on polling day:

> ...the mayor rose to take a show of hands but Moss, a hanger-on of the house of commons, who annoys liberal members to a great extent by daily importuning them for franks, presented himself and after uttering a great deal of twaddle respecting Mr. O'Connell, proposed Henry Gompertz esq., ... the mayor waited sometime for a seconder... but was only answered by an uproarious combination of cheers and laughter, followed by cries of 'who is he?' 'we won't have him'. At length, Mr John Carter, a brewer

[59] Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, p. 982.

[60] *Leeds Mercury*, 29 July 1837.

> residing at Knottingley, emerged from the body of the meeting... and seconded his nomination...[61]

Not surprisingly, Gompertz received no votes and it was assumed by many that Moss, a Londoner who had no connections with the borough, had been attracted to Pontefract by the quantities of free alcohol available and had sought to add spice to the election by nominating his own candidate. It was considered unremarkable that Gompertz' seconder had been a brewer. However, the extraordinary episode was continued when on December 4th 1837, Gompertz petitioned against the return of Stanley on account of bribery and corruption:

> ...at the time of the Pontefract election and when Mr Gompertz (the petitioner) offered his services he was imprisoned in the Queen's bench for a debt of £16,000. Moss, his agent, said that at the time of the election — although not an elector — he had proposed Mr Gompertz whose nomination was seconded by an elector. It appeared that Gompertz 'a man of straw', a prisoner in the bench, had evidently been put forward by this Mr Moss, and the present proceeding was got up if for no worse purpose, at least to put the sitting members who were *bona fide* returned, to great expense in the shape of a petition, there were suspicions regarding the sureties to the petition — one describing himself as resident in Regents Park... there was indeed an air of suspicion of dishonesty attaching to the whole affair...[62]

Although the petition was discharged, the whole episode characterises the low regard in which the borough was held throughout the country. That a debtor and a 'hanger-on' could execute such a scam brought the constituency into further disrepute and deflected attention away from Smith's genuine petition which was presented two months later.

Both Pollington and Monckton Milnes had genuine patronal interests in the borough and Gully could be regarded as the sincere champion of the people and a true popular candidate. However, the extensive and systematic bribery and corruption prevented either

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[61] *Ibid.*

[62] *Ibid.*, 23 December 1837.

deference or independence from gaining the upper hand. Indeed, Pollington and to a lesser extent Milnes were able to flout the conventions of political patrons by ignoring the wishes of constituents and even declining opportunities to be present in the constituency during electoral contests.[63] Party principles were rarely aired during election campaigns, the split between candidates usually being between those who were against the practice of paying 'head money' and those who supported it by their silence on the issue.

Halifax — the assertion of deference

The Parliamentary borough of Halifax has been classed as a borough under influence; but this decision obscures the ambiguity of the situation in the town. (Se Table 6.1) Although a historian of the town has classed political activity before 1850 as 'basically the product of two factors: the technological transformation with its ancillary social dislocations through which the town was passing and the potent and powerful voice of religion'[64]; it is possible to observe powerful interests at work against a backdrop of political debate amongst the electorate. In fact, Halifax in the eighteen-thirties is an example of the *creation* of an electoral interest amidst the new conditions produced by the 1832 Reform Act. The interest was born out of an alliance between the Whig-Liberal factory owning hierarchy of the town headed by Jonathan Akroyd, a vocal opponent of factory reform and Charles Wood, who was married to the daughter of Earl Grey and was the son of Sir Francis Lindley Wood, baronet of Barnsley and a kinsman of Earl Fitzwilliam.[65] Once elected, Wood, who in the pre-reform

[63] Pollington's absence in Palestine and Greece during the 1835 contest has already been noted. In 1837, Milnes issued a campaign poster which began 'being compelled to absent myself from you tomorrow and the two following days..'. Houghton MSS, E1/4. 18 July 1837, Richard Monckton Milnes campaign poster.

[64] Jowitt, 'A Crossroads in Halifax Politics: Election of 1847', p. 21.

[65] For Akroyd see: J T Ward, *The Factory Movement* (London, 1962), p. 50. For Wood see: Jowitt, 'Charles Wood'; *Halifax Guardian Almanack and Literary Companion*, (Halifax, 1895); Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, p. 810.

Parliaments had been forced to rely on the venal and proprietary boroughs of Grimsby and Wareham controlled by members of the Whig establishment, sought to establish the interest and remained MP for Halifax from 1832 until 1865. The following year he was created Viscount Halifax of Monk Bretton. Wood was very much an establishment figure and was a member of every Whig government between 1832 and 1874.

Although Wood had a local estate, he was rarely seen in Halifax between election campaigns. Indeed, he wrote to his father of his satisfaction that Rawdon Briggs, a local banker, had been chosen as his running-partner in 1832. He hoped that Briggs' local knowledge would 'ease me of the business of the place [Halifax]'.[66] Wood made few concessions to the requirements of the Halifax electorate and thus the relationship was always stormy throughout the eighteen-thirties. He opposed further extensions of the franchise, would not commit himself to the repeal of the Corn Laws and at one stage resigned from the government, practically becoming an independent MP.[67] Despite regular rumours, fuelled by the Tory *Halifax Guardian* that Wood and the Halifax Whig-Liberals were parting company, Wood remained the official party candidate. The reasons for his success can only be speculated upon. Wood was above local in-fighting and disputes and his status as a government minister brought prestige to the town. However, his wealth and local influence must have put him in an impenetrable position in spite of the differences of opinion.

The Wood interest thus secured the nomination of one of the Halifax seats and it could fairly be said that one seat was firmly under a patrons' influence. There is also evidence of attempts by the Tories to win control of the other seat throughout the eighteen-thirties and there

[66] Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Hickleton MSS, A2.35. 2 July 1832, Wood to Sir F L Wood.

[67] Jowitt, 'Charles Wood', pp. 15–54.

were several closely fought contests characterised by the acrimonious election of 1835 in which the Tory candidate triumphed by one vote over the second Whig-Liberal and which was followed by riots. It is interesting that despite the impenetrable position of Wood, Dod classifies the influence in Halifax as 'possessed by the heads of the cloth making firms. Mr Norris, of Savile Hall and Mr Rawson of Hope House, have influence'.[68] Wood is not mentioned and Norris and Rawson are influential *Tory* figures.

It is clear from the evidence of Anne Lister's diaries that the Tories were keen to come to an electoral understanding or pact with the Whigs. They viewed Wood's position as unassailable considering his close connections with the leading factory owners in the town, but hoped that the Whigs distaste of radicalism and of the expense of contests would make them amenable to a 'non-aggression pact'.

The Tories were keen to have as a candidate, in 1832, a member of one of the leading Conservative aristocratic families in the area, all of whom were experienced in the management of proprietary boroughs:

> Lady Stuart speaking of the news of the day said there would be members for Halifax as one of the towns of 10,000 inhabitants. Asked if Lord Pollington's next brother was of age. No! Lord Pollington would be next June. Then said I, he would do very well for one of our members; and I have another in my mind *who would do all the business* (meaning W Priestley). Lady Stuart thought the thing would be very corrupt and expensive. Oh! no said I, we should manage all this better...[69]

This extract illustrates that in 1832 the leading Tories of the town perceived Halifax as a town that could be bought and that, with a modicum of 'management' it would be possible to install in one of the borough's two seats, an aristocratic Tory candidate. There had been relief on the part of the Tory interest in 1830 when Halifax was promoted from a one member to a two member borough because it was

[68] Dod, *Electoral Facts*, p. 135.

[69] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/6, Anne Lister's diaries, 5 January 1832 (my italics).

realised that an alliance between the powerful owners of cloth factories and the son of the local Whig aristocrat would have first call on the constituency.[70] It was recognised, however, that there were substantial Tory interests in the town, centred around the owner of the Halifax and District Banking Company, Mr Rawson and that with the right candidate and some finance these Tory interests could be brought into play to mimic the successful alliance between the Whig factory interests and Wood on the Whig side.

Lord Pollington was not approached in 1832 but was not discarded as a possible candidate for the borough:

> Mr Adam came. I said I was afraid we should have another general election soon. No Conservative members of the borough seem to have been fixed on. I mentioned Lord Pollington and Mr Alexander, the counsel; Mr Adam seemed well enough satisfied with both; but would mention the former to a few of the influentials of our party...
>
> ... Saw Mr Adam. Election talk. At a loss for candidates. The good people objected to the character of Lord Pollington. Mr Adam could not contradict this opinion... Mr Norris had been talked of but the Norrises are so unpopular. If Lord Pollington's character answered, it would do if he could give £500 if elected and £400 if beaten or at least £300 if beaten...
>
> ... Lord Pollington would be pleased to renew his family connection with Halifax. He has no fear but of being pledged by his father for Pontefract. Lord Scarborough is against him there, might, perhaps, be for him at Halifax...[71]

The centrality of the importance of money — above that of good character demonstrates the conviction of the leading Tories in the borough that the Halifax electorate could be purchased for the right price, despite their numbers and the presence of a highly controlled Whig interest in the town.

In 1832, other Tory luminaries had followed the same logic as Anne Lister but had decided to woo a Lascelles, knowing the

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[70] *Ibid.*, 18 March 1830.

[71] *Ibid.*, 7, 8 and 27 June 1839.

Harewoods were keen to underline their position as the leading Tory aristocrats in the West Riding by capturing a borough or county seat. They had already considered the Earl of Mexborough and were certainly considering one of the Halifax seats as a winnable proposition

> Found Mr J pledged to Mr Wm Lascelles. Though he said he was not pledged, yet he had gone so far as to ask him if he would stand if he was solicited and the answer was 'Nothing would give him greater pleasure'. It seems this took place last March. I observed that he had, indeed, taken time by the forelock. 'Yes! Nothing like it in elections'... He had asked Lord Mexborough first, if he would stand for Halifax. Lord Mexborough declined, saying he was now, since his father's death sure of Pontefract. He had got 400 votes promised [for Mr Lascelles] and was always getting a vote or two when he could...[72]

In the event, Lascelles withdrew his nomination and the Tories finally settled on James Stuart Wortley, the younger son of Lord Wharncliffe. His brother, John stood as a candidate for the West Riding county seat and the Wharncliffes had evidently decided to promote (and finance) their interest vigorously in the area; although Lord Wharncliffe remained realistic about James Stuart Wortley's prospects in Parliament and begged him not to neglect the law for politics:

> Bad and precarious as the trade of a politician has always been, it has now become ten hundred times worse than ever, and holds out to a younger brother now nothing but poverty and disappointment. Let me beseech you then, my dear boy, not to make shipwreck of your prospects upon that rock...[73]

Despite, the highly charged atmosphere of 1832 and the country-wide distaste for the Tories, in Halifax it was clearly believed that Wortley had a good chance of being elected and these hopes were encouraged after Wortley made an eloquent election speech in the town emphasising his commitment to free trade, the end of colonial slavery and calculatingly, in a constituency with a large proportion of non-conformists for the abolition of church rates.[74] The Tory landlords used

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[72] *Ibid.*, 16 June 1832.

[73] Cited in C Grosvenor and C Beilby, Lord Stuart Wortley, *The First Lady Wharncliffe and Her Family, 1779–1856*, two volumes (London, 1927), volume 2, p. 150.

[74] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/6, Anne Lister's diaries, 5 July 1832.

tried and tested election tactics of influencing tenants and delivering them to the polling booths.[75] The Tories were not as well managed as the Whigs and Liberals, however, and rather than having professional agents and local election head quarters, much of the organisation of the Tory interest was carried out on an *ad hoc* basis by Mr Rawson, owner of Halifax and District bank.[76] The Tories were, thus shocked and aghast when the result came. The Whigs had also been blown off course because of the decision of Michael Stocks, 'a radical firebrand', to stand.[77] Wood had no intention of being returned with so extreme a radical and thus the Whigs looked desperately round the leading Whig families of the town for a running mate, finally alighting on Rawdon Briggs, jun. Briggs and Wood thus had to adopt the uncomfortable position of opposing the popular candidate. The hope for the Tories was that Stocks would split the Whig vote, thus 'the radicals will bring in Stocks and the 2 Whig candidates, Wood and Rawdon Briggs will be left in the lurch'.[78] In fact Wortley made a poor showing and came bottom of the poll. Stocks attributed his third place position to 'on the one hand, Tory power and influence and on the other Whig threats and intimidation to an extent and of a character unparalleled in the history of elections'.[79]

The Tory families were in deep shock. James Stuart Wortley, exhibiting supreme confidence had not spent all his time in Halifax; continuing to pursue his career as a lawyer on the northern circuit. However, he wrote to his family in July claiming that 'you will hear from Father how my affairs are prospering at Halifax. I am happy to say they go on *de mieux en mieux*, and it must be by some strange

[75] *Ibid.*, 26 and 30 July; 11–13 December 1832. For a discussion of Anne Lister's canvassing methods see Chapter IV.

[76] 'Mr Rawson's servant brought me my account from the bank and a note asking me to get John Bottomley's vote for Mr Wortley', *ibid.*, 6 July 1832.

[77] *Ibid.*, 29 June 1832.

[78] *Ibid.*, 30 June 1832, draft letter to Lady Stuart de Rothesay.

[79] *Ibid.*, 7 July 1832.

reverse if I am disappointed'.[80] Anne Lister reflected Wortley's disappointment in a letter she wrote to his London cousins after the election in December, 1832:

> So thoroughly unexpected was my disappointment at the loss of Mr James Wortley's election, I have never got up my political spirits since. All the soi-disant knowing ones and the soi-disant leading people had made themselves so sure of success, that failure burst upon us like a thunderbolt. There was decidedly clever management on the other side, and this and the popular cry bore down everything. I hardly thought myself capable of such strong political excitement and mortification. I fear the elections are bad enough — far too many anti-church men. I am completely sick of public events...[81]

It was essential for the Tories to reorganise themselves. They blamed the election defeat of 1832 on poor management, on the spirit of the times and on lack of money. They appointed an election manager, Mr John Edwards and for the first time canvassed the borough. James Wortley was retained as candidate because of the impressive performance he had put up in front of a hooting and hissing mob in 1832.[82] In addition, Lord Wharncliffe had offered to bear half the costs of the election. The Whigs, after the scare of 1832, looked around for a 'respectable', radical who would appease the populace of the town but who would not offend 'respectable opinion'. They chose Edward Protheroe who campaigned on a ticket of religious and civil liberty, but Wood was never happy his running-mate and the alliance between the Whigs and the radicals was not fully implemented.[83] By the end of December, 1834 it was clear from canvassing returns that Wortley was ahead of Protheroe in three out of four districts of Halifax and ahead of Wood in two out of the four:

> It seems from Mr Edwards private book that the promised votes stand as under:

[80] Cited in Grosvenor and Beilby, *The First Lady Wharncliffe*, volume 2, p. 151.

[81] Lister MSS, letter 647. 31 December 1832, draft from Anne Lister to Lady Vere Cameron.

[82] Lister MSS, Anne Lister's diary, 30 June 1832.

[83] Jowitt, 'Parliamentary Politics in Halifax', pp. 181–5.

District	Wortley	Wood	Protheroe
SW	101	85	65
SE	95	76	57
NE	62	117	104
NW	75	80	52
Total	333	358	230[84]

The Tory committee and Wortley's agent, Francis Holroyde, a prominent local solicitor, mobilised all their forces in the last week of the election campaign. Anne Lister's help in converting or neutralising her tenants was called upon every day in the week from 31st December 1834 to 7th January 1835. The close of poll after the first day, was Wood 294, Protheroe 273 and Wortley 260. However, none of the Tory committee had voted and a strong showing on the last day resulted in victory for Wood and Wortley. The latter by only one vote. A correspondent to *The Times* wrote of the desperate tactics employed by the Whigs: 'Nothing could exceed the excitement of the scene during the latter part of Wednesday; the Whigs brought three electors from their sick beds and one of the patients has already died in consequence'.[85] Such was the disgust of the townsfolk with both the result and, what was seen as unfair Tory electioneering tactics that there was spontaneous rioting at the close of polling with ten thousand pounds worth of damage done to the property of leading Tories in the town. including Rawson the banker and the vicar of Halifax.[86] The result of the election was unclear for several days, but as Lady Wharncliffe wrote to her mother:

> I hope that Missy will have written you word of Jem's success dear Mama before you can get this letter. We are however very anxious for further accounts; for the poll has been *so* near that the majority is only just enough, and as some say it is three & some only one, the truth is still to be made evident. The best proof however of his victory is the fury of his opponents,

[84] Lister MSS, Anne Lister's diary, 30 December 1834.

[85] *The Times*, 12 January 1835

[86] *Ibid.*, 8 January 1835; *Proceedings on the Trial of the cause of Browne v Leyland and Others* (Halifax, 1835).

> who have broken the windows of his Committee room, and of poor dear Musgrave's house where he was living...[87]

Wortley's victory in 1835 proved to be a fragile one and he lost his seat in the next general election. The best efforts of the Tory party to build up an electoral base in Halifax had been to no avail and the borough returned a Wood and Protheroe to parliament for the remainder of the decade.

Huddersfield — the creation of a deference community

Huddersfield in the eighteen-thirties was typical of those new parliamentary boroughs which the opponents of the Reform Act categorised as being no different from the traditional pocket boroughs of the eighteenth century. This was due to the overwhelming influence of the Ramsdens, a family which, through its connections with Earl Fitzwilliam, was no stranger to the phenomenon of 'electoral influence'. Indeed a contemporary stated at the time of the passing of the Reform Act: 'In London they say if Huddersfield returns Ramsden then Huddersfield rises up a new Sarum'.[88] In an attempt to counter this influence the boundaries of the parliamentary borough had been extended beyond the town to the parish of Huddersfield but this had little effect, as the number of voters as a proportion of the total population was a minuscule 2.2 per cent in 1832.[89]

Nevertheless Huddersfield could present a valid case for its inclusion among the number of newly enfranchised boroughs in 1832. Its population in 1831 was comparable to that of other new parliamentary boroughs and it had a burgeoning textile industry and thus could be said to be representative of an important 'regional

[87] Cited in Grosvenor and Beilby, *The First Lady Wharncliffe*, volume 2, p. 231.
[88] *Leeds Intelligencer*, July 12, 1832.
[89] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. xi (n).

interest'. The town had grown from a 'miserable village, the houses poor and scattered, the streets crooked and dirty' in 1801 to a place with responsibility for its 'lighting, watching and cleansing' after an Act was passed in 1820.[90] The town gained its independence from the old Court Leet via this Act, but the commissioners who now ran the town were still subject to approval by the Ramsden family. Thus, perhaps for this reason, the town was restricted to returning one MP rather than two.

Although there is some evidence to support the view that, 'without coming quite into the category of proprietary boroughs. Huddersfield in the eighteen-thirties was sufficiently under the control of the Whig, Sir John Ramsden, to defy the efforts of radicals and tories to capture the seat' it would be wrong to group the constituency with those such as Malton, Scarborough and Ripon.[91] There were contested elections throughout the eighteen-thirties. In 1834, the anti-Ramsden vote outnumbered the pro-Ramsden vote by twenty-one, and in 1837 the Ramsden candidate was a mere twenty-two votes ahead of his opponent. This state of affairs was largely due to the efforts of one man, Richard Oastler, the steward of the second-largest landowner in the area, Thomas Thornhill of Fixby Hall. The extent of his influence can be illustrated by the fact that the election of 1841 that followed his ignominious departure from the town in 1838 was not contested. Therefore, Huddersfield politics in the eighteen-thirties were characterised by a battle-royal between the Ramsden family as Whig patrons on the one side and Oastler, 'The Factory King', on the other.

The town of Huddersfield was built on land that had been in the possession of the Ramsden family for two hundred and fifty years. In the preamble to a petition to parliament (dated between 1769 and 1776) for permission for a canal crossing the Ramsden estate and linking the

[90] Brook, *The Story of Huddersfield*, p. 457.
[91] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. xi (n).

River Calder to the River Colne was the statement 'that Sir John Ramsden is Lord of the Manor of Huddersfield and owner of the whole town (except one house) and of a considerable part of the lands thereto'.[92] In 1853 rents from the Ramsden property in the town contributed to the bulk of the £16,229 of revenue J W Ramsden received after paying the running costs of his estates there.[93] In political terms, the Ramsdens could be described as 'cautious Whigs'. They were members of the national Whig establishment and were important both because of their extensive land ownership throughout much of Yorkshire and their kinship with Earl Fitzwilliam. Their cautious nature and perhaps their self interest can be illustrated by Sir John Ramsden's view on the 1832 Reform Act. He supported some aspects of the Act in general, and those that would lead to the enfranchisement of Huddersfield in particular, but had reservations about the extent of the proposals.[94]

The potential extent of the Ramsden influence is in no doubt. Neither is there doubt about the family's disposition towards proprietary boroughs nor their readiness to adopt the techniques of patrons such as their close relation, Earl Fitzwilliam of Wentworth Woodhouse. For example, Sir J Ramsden wrote to his son, J C Ramsden in 1832 about the latter's candidature for the county seat of the North Riding of Yorkshire, reminding him that, '[I] shall be ready to defray the expense that will be incurred'.[95] This attempt by J C Ramsden to secure a county seat failed and having already decided against standing for Huddersfield he turned to his uncle, Earl Fitzwilliam for assistance. Fitzwilliam was quick to respond. In a letter

[92] Ramsden MSS, DD/RA/F, File 32, No 8. Preamble to petition for canal from River Calder to Rive Colne.

[93] D Whomsley, 'Radical Politics in the 1850s and 1860s: Joshua Hobson and the Tenants' Rights Dispute in Huddersfield', *Journal of Local and Regional History*, 7 (1987), p. 14.

[94] See Chapter I, p. 4.

[95] Ramsden MSS, DD/RA/F20, No 27. No date, Sir J Ramsden to J C Ramsden.

to his nephew he wrote, 'not a word more is to be said on the subject of Malton... [save] that it is again at your service'.[96]

But the family seem to have regarded Huddersfield in a different light. They treated the representation of the town, not as a possession which could be passed onto family and friends but as an issue in which the sentiments of the population of the town should be taken into account. Sir J Ramsden wrote to his son on September 9th 1832 after he had been approached and questioned on the matter of the representation of Huddersfield:

> A friend of mine mentioned to me that Colonel Grey... is very anxious to represent H[uddersfield]... If Colonel Grey is supported by me it will not be adhering to what we professed of letting the inhabitants make their own selection...[97]

Sir J Ramsden's position appears to have been to let the voters of Huddersfield decide the choice of the Whig candidate, as long as he had the power of approval — similar to the position of the selection of borough commissioners. The reason why he adopted this stance when his status in the town was such that he could have dictated his wishes to the voters, is debatable. The evidence that survives however, suggests that he, at least initially, was confident that the electors would act in accordance with his wishes without prompting. In a letter to his son, Sir J Ramsden explained his relationship with the borough's electors:

> Last night brought me a deputation from H[uddersfield]... They said they were most anxious that one of my family would accept the Representation and that nothing could be more improper than that it should be represented by Captain Fenton who they considered as determined a radical as Joseph Wood... What is now to be done? I really think that from what those Persons said to me it is very improper to support Mr Fenton...[98]

Thus it appears that Sir J Ramsden maintained his position, not through an aggressive use of influence on his part but because of the

[96] *Ibid.*, No. 25. No date, Earl Fitzwilliam to J C Ramsden.

[97] *Ibid.*, No. 26. 9 September 1832, Sir J Ramsden to J C Ramsden.

[98] *Ibid.*, No. 27. No date, Sir J Ramsden to J C Ramsden.

deferential attitude on the part of the voters. Indeed this position is nowhere better summed up than in a petition sent to Sir J C Ramsden by the electors after he had suffered a riotous reception on a visit to the town before the 1832 election:

> We feel fully confident that when the extraordinary excitement, created by the circumstances of the times, shall have passed away, the inhabitants of the township will most cordially unite in those wishes so handsomely expressed by yourself, of expanding and cementing an acquaintance which in its results cannot fail to be honourable and advantageous to both parties...[99]

This final sentiment corresponds closely to O'Gorman's 'mutual theory of deference' whereby patrons preserved their position by conforming to a set of customary social values.[100] Deference was not a relationship merely between men of unequal wealth, power and status but a reciprocal relationship in which both partners had obligations as well as rights. In return for votes the patron had to fulfil a beneficial social and economic role in the locality and take care not to upset local feeling. The voter was not blindly deferential to the patron but could withdraw his support if the patron did not satisfy his obligations. Of course it is difficult to ascertain the motives of those electors who supported the candidates nominated by the Ramsdens, but the fluctuating levels of support for the Whigs throughout the 1830s disproves the assumption that once a candidate had the support of the family they were as good as elected.

Even so, the Ramsdens would have had a more comfortable ride throughout the decade after 1832 if they had not faced an organised opposition. As previously stated, the credit for this was due to Richard Oastler of Fixby Hall. Although he was better known for his campaign against the factory owners for a ten hour day, he was involved in a number of related campaigns throughout his life. Politically he was

[99] Ramsden MSS, DD/RA/C 20/1. 2 July 1832, address by electors to John Charles Ramsden. The address was signed by 273 voters.

[100] F O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in Unreformed England, 1760–1832', *Journal of Modern History*, 56 (1984), pp. 391–429.

described as an ultra Tory. He was in favour of the Church of England (and rabidly anti-Roman Catholic) and against free trade, the New Poor Law and political reform, stating in 1833 that the Reform Act, 'just admits the very class of voters who fancy they have an interest in keeping down the people... I should rejoice to see the suffrage extended upon the ancient and varied plan because then no one class would be able to rule all the others'.[101] This antipathy towards the middle class whom the Reform Act had enfranchised added to his campaigns for an improvement in the quality of life of the poor, whose lives he considered ruined by the greed of the industrial capitalists, place him in a similar position to Disraeli and other 'Tory Democrats' of the mid-nineteenth century.

His first campaign on taking up residence in Fixby Hall was to lead a tithe war against the vicar of the parish of Halifax under whose auspices Fixby Hall lay. As the representative of the largest landowner affected by the new vicar's unprecedented demands for portions of all manner of goods and services, Oastler co-ordinated a campaign using techniques that would become effective in his later political campaigns against Ramsden. Each township in the parish set up a local committee and sent delegates to a central body, headed by Oastler, which organised the campaigning and lobbying. Faced with such concerted opposition the vicar backed down.[102]

His next, and major, campaign was of course launching the factory reform movement. Again, this organisation established contacts and practices which Oastler utilised in his political campaigns. The start of the factory reform movement can be traced back to the Fixby Compact of October 16th 1830, when a delegation of factory operatives from the Huddersfield Short Time Committee met with Oastler and resolved 'to put all political and sectarian differences aside and work

[101] R Oastler, *Facts and Plain Words on Everyday Subjects* (Huddersfield, 1833).
[102] R Oastler, *Vicarial Tithes* (Halifax, 1827).

for the common cause'.[103] Besides this crucial alliance between Oastler and members of the radical working class the factory reform campaign saw Oastler adopting a policy of intense, unceasing lobbying via letters to newspapers, meetings with influential people (such as the Duke of Wellington) a steady flow of pamphlets, mass meetings, demonstrations and marches — all of which, to a greater or lesser extent, he would employ in the Huddersfield electoral contests. Despite the continuation of the campaign against the factory owners, Oastler found time not only to organise resistance to Ramsden in Huddersfield, but to stand as a candidate himself, twice in 1837, to take an active role in contests for Leeds and the West Riding and to run a campaign against the New Poor Law.[104]

It can be argued then that Huddersfield was the embodiment of the traumas and dilemmas presented to the country by the adoption of a reformed electoral system in 1832. On one side there is the Ramsden family representing eighteenth century ideas of patronage, influence and deference and on the other is Richard Oastler, a 'professional' lobbyist and politician determined that all men should be involved in the electoral contest, promoting issues round which he could rally support rather than his personal nominees. It is these two opposing ideologies — the old and the new — which should be borne in mind when the electoral battles of Huddersfield are examined in more detail.

The clash between the Ramsdens and Oastler began as early as the 1832 election in the town. J C Ramsden, for a short time in 1832, was adopted as the Whig candidate for the constituency. Oastler in determining whom he should support asked Ramsden for his views on Sadler's bill to shorten the working day in factories for women and children. Ramsden replied 'avowing uncompromising hostility' to the

[103] Driver, *Tory Radical*, p. 180.

[104] For a statement of Oastler's argument against the New Poor Law, see R Oastler, *The Right of the Poor to Liberty and Life* (London, 1838).

bill thus Oastler pledged his support for the radical candidate Joseph Wood.[105] Oastler's opposition to Ramsden was at the root of the riotous, aggressive reception he received when Ramsden visited the town later in the year. Ramsden's response however, was more subtle. He detailed his father, Lord of the Manor of Huddersfield, to write to Oastler's employer, Sir Thomas Thornhill of Riddlesworth, Norfolk. Thornhill wrote a strong letter to Oastler:

> I have received a letter from Sir J Ramsden complaining that you had produced great excitement in our part of the County of York and that you were interesting yourself in Huddersfield to oppose him, Sir J Ramsden, and to support a Radical candidate, Captain Wood. I wrote him for an answer that I was sorry you had interfered with him — and that I would not keep persons in my employ who supported Radical candidates — that as to the excitement produced, I was for Mr Sadler's factory bill...[106]

Oastler was encouraged by Thornhill's tacit support of his campaign for Sadler's factory bill and thus in his reply glossed over the fact that he had indeed entered into an informal alliance with the radicals in Huddersfield. Instead he directed his invective against the Whigs in general and the Ramsdens in particular. His spirited response seemed to have achieved the desired effect as he retained both his position as steward of Fixby Hall and Thornhill's support:

> Surely, Sir J Ramsden has influence enough over this neighbourhood without striding over Fixby also! These are the men [the Whigs] who have been crying down the Duke of Newcastle for saying — 'he had a right to do what he would with his own' — and now they would usurp the right of their neighbours also and they require you to help them crush me... surely Sir John has room enough on his own estate to crush and tyrannise, without extending over the domains of his Tory neighbour...[107]

Ramsden's efforts to silence Oastler in 1832 were unsuccessful and until Oastler was forced to leave Huddersfield in 1838 the family had to put up with his agitation against them and their candidates. Eventually, in 1832 they decided to support Captain Fenton, a local army captain, justice of the peace and deputy lieutenant for the West

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[105] Driver, *Tory Radical*, pp. 186–7.

[106] R Oastler, *Fleet Papers*, 13 February, 1841.

[107] *Ibid.*

Riding. His opponent was Captain Wood, a local landowner supported by the radicals. Oastler's efforts on Wood's behalf were not rewarded and Fenton took the seat with a majority of one hundred.

In 1834 a by-election was held in the town after the death of Captain Fenton. The Ramsden nominee was a strong candidate, John Blackburne, a popular lawyer on the Northern circuit. He had been appointed in 1832 to investigate the state of local government and his committee's report led to the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. The Tory-Radical alliance of two year's earlier showed signs of disintegrating. Wood, since 1832 had been converted to Catholicism, a subject of great national debate and emotion as the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act had been passed only four years earlier. Locally, the subject was delicate due to the presence of a significant number of Irish Catholics in the town. Wood, recognising his difficult position wrote to William Stocks, the Chief Constable of Huddersfield and a radical and suggested that as he was not standing, Michael Sadler should be selected as the popular candidate instead. Eventually, this was the course the Radical committee took and Sadler opened his campaign with a public entry into the town. Wood's supporters however, could not accept the Radicals' adoption of a Tory — even an enlightened Tory — and thus began a rival campaign, without Wood's consent, on his behalf. A month later, in response to favourable reports of his support Wood reversed his earlier decision not to stand and put forward an election address outlining his radical convictions. The situation was further complicated when twelve hundred operatives signed a petition requesting Oastler to stand.

The collapse of the Tory-Radical alliance and the subsequent result, which suggested that the Ramsden nominee could have been defeated, led to a bitter exchange between the two halves of the former partnership — personified by Joseph Wood and Richard Oastler. Their quarrel was carried out publicly via the issuing of a flurry of pamphlets

during the months after the election. The language of the publications was strong and full of recrimination, especially on Oastler's part but both in the end concluded that their actions had only led to the success of the Ramsden nominee. The way forward for the future was for a reconstitution of the alliance that had served them well in 1832.

Oastler began the attack with his pamphlet, *Penny Bellowing* which was liberally scattered with outrageous language that betrays prejudices against both the Whigs and the Catholics:

> Thou nominated Sadler as thy man and then forsook him and betrayed him. Yet Joseph, the double part thou actedst on that occasion, might gratify and please the avowed infidels — the Papists and the Whigs, but depend upon it Joseph, THE PEOPLE saw through thy guise and hated thee, — and now they know that they were sold to the Whigs by a band of men who used thy name to gain their ends...[108]

In a further pamphlet Oastler took his accusations even further and virtually accused Wood of collusion with the Ramsden faction: '[Wood] did most scandalously deny his own deeds and allow himself to be made the instrument of the Whigs, to assist Sir John in dictating to the people of Huddersfield'.[109]

Wood's original letter to Stocks, the constable of the borough and chairman of the Radical committee in the town, outlined the reasons for his original stance — which was not to stand — and the reasons why a Tory candidate should be chosen to represent the radicals:

> Blackburne, we know would not stand at the last election and poor Fenton was fixed upon as Ramsden's last resource... Blackburne is most likely to be Ramsden's nominee. Then you may surrender at discretion proclaiming the Rottenness and Closeness of the Borough... [Ramsden's plan to make Blackburne his candidate] will make you slaves of Ramsden for ever... [thus the solution is] if the Tories will agree to set up one of their brood (like Sadler or Oastler) who has laboured for the People's Good and will

[108] R Oastler, *A Penny Bellowing* (Huddersfield, 1834).

[109] R Oastler, *Extreme Unction Administered to King Joseph* (Huddersfield, 1834), p. 3.

> pledge himself on the Corporation bill and extension of the suffrage, to join with them against the Whig and Ramsden candidates...[110]

Wood later admitted that it was a mistake to split the Tory-radical vote but maintained that he stood because of public demand. The experiences of 1834 did however lead to an uneasy truce between the Radical and Conservative camps and a determination by both to unite to fight their common enemy — the Whigs.

The anti-Ramsden vote was thus totally split but the election drama resulted in an improved turnout and although Blackburne topped the poll by eighty-seven votes the Tory and Radical vote combined was higher than Blackburne's by twenty-one votes. This alerted both the Ramsdens to the fact that their nominee could be defeated and Oastler to the need for a strong, united Tory-Radical alliance.

Oastler's opportunity to lead the attack against the Ramsdens came in 1837, when, after the death of Blackburne, Huddersfield was plunged into yet another electoral contest. This time the Whigs' chose Edward Ellice, a nephew of Lord Grey as their candidate.

The Tory and Radical committees were united in their choice of Oastler as their candidate. He began his campaign with a mass election meeting at which ten thousand attended.[111] The Radicals put forward their own election manifesto under the heading, 'Why do the Radicals support Mr Oastler who designates himself an Ultra Tory?'; partly to counter the attempts to split the alliance (as in 1834) which were led by the Whig press and especially the

Chapter VII

Deference and the County Electorate

Landlord influence and the county electorate

The publication of D C Moore's important book, *The Politics of Deference* in 1976 confirmed for many historians the closed nature of county elections in the period before the Second Reform Act.[1] Moore emphasised the continuity between the unreformed electoral system and the post 1832 position pointing to the tendency of electors to vote in territorial blocks in harmony with the wishes of the leading landowner of the area; the lack of electoral contests and the fact that when contests occurred they did so because of feuds between magnates rather than because of a genuine desire of the electorate to express their independence. A situation which he argues, persisted into the late nineteenth century. Moore ascribes the tenants' willingness to vote in accord with their landlords to their recognition of the social, economic and political superiority of these county elites, describing the county electorate as a hierarchically structured 'deference community'. His evidence comes from an analysis of county poll books from which these deference networks can be traced — in a topographical analysis of the county electorate. Moore's picture of a passive county electorate dominated by an active squirearchy clarifies earlier work by Gash who wrote that 'in country districts... the situation was semi-feudal, and the tenant followed the political tenets of his landlord, as a kind of political service due to the owner of the land from the occupier'.[2] Some historians who have studied the period before the Reform Act have painted a picture of county freeholders being 'herded' to the polls to

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[1] Moore, *The Politics of Deference*. See also Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*; Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*.

[2] Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 117.

vote in their landlord's interest.[3] This has led others to argue that the lot of the county elector was unchanged until well into the nineteenth century, perhaps until the 1884 Reform Act which enfranchised the agricultural workers.[4] The role of the 1832 Reform Act in this analysis was merely to strengthen the position of landlords; to make the territorial blocks that were so important to the outcome of county elections more cohesive and to swamp the county electorates with the so called 'tenants-at-will' who owed their very livelihoods to the whims of their landlords.

This vision of rural, electoral inactivity has been attacked on many fronts. Eighteenth century historians such as Speck and O'Gorman have painted a far different picture of the Hanoverian county electorate.[5] Deference existed, but it was less of a feudal obligation by tenants to landlords and more of a 'mutual dependency' where both sides had duties as well as rights. Tenants were unlikely to support a landowner merely because of his social status in the locality. If a landowner did not provide the locality with government posts and services, he was liable to be ignored by the electorate. Unanimity where it existed was due to shared interests rather than the oppressive application of landlord power. In addition, the limited nature of Moore's evidence has been exposed by O'Gorman who has produced alternative figures of township concordance for both the pre– and post–1832 position.[6] Historians who have written on the Reform Act have also criticised Moore's view of the motives behind the extension of the franchise and the subsequent redistribution of seats pointing to the

[3] Thus Namier viewed the forty shilling freeholders in the mid eighteenth century as a class dependent upon territorial magnates. Namier, *The Structure of Politics*, pp. 64–74.

[4] For example Clark argued that 'the county turnout reflected the efforts and depth of pocket of the warring magnates — as it had done under Anne, and as it was to do well into the nineteenth century'. Clark, *English Society*, pp. 22–3.

[5] Speck, Gray and Hopkinson, 'Computer Analysis of Poll Books' and O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*.

[6] O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in Unreformed England', pp. 391–429.

genuine contemporary fears of revolution and painting a picture of an aristocracy bloodied and divided by the reform crises in the eighteen-thirties.[7] Finally Moore's thesis of the post–1832 electorate has been dismissed by nineteenth century historians.[8] The vitality of the county electorates has been illustrated along with evidence of other influences on their voting behaviour. Fisher, for example, views the notion of a 'deferential electorate', as a limited concept which obscures the genuine attacks upon the electoral influence of the elite that did take place, especially in counties facing the challenges of industrialisation.[9]

The West Riding electorate

The county of Yorkshire, which immediately before 1832 had returned six MPs had long been a feuding ground for some of the most powerful men in the land. To be returned as a member for Yorkshire was a much sought-after honour — the jewel in the crown of any parliamentary career. Indeed, the Fitzwilliams who had countless pocket boroughs at their disposal nevertheless were prepared to spend hundreds even thousands of pounds to secure the county seat.[10] For the Tories, Yorkshire was often the prize that dangled just out of reach, although they had a notable success in 1807 when Wilberforce was returned top of the poll and there were occasions when the Whigs accommodated them in an electoral pact to avoid the expense of a contest.

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[7] Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*; N McCord, 'Some Difficulties of Parliamentary Reform', *Historical Journal* 10 (1967).

[8] Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, pp. 27–9; R W Davis, *Political Change and Continuity, 1760–1885* (Newton Abbot, 1972); J R Fisher, 'Issues and Influence: Two By-Elections in South Nottinghamshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 24 (1981), pp. 155–63.

[9] J R Fisher, 'The Limits of Deference: Agricultural Communities in a Mid-Nineteenth Century Election Campaign', *Journal of British Studies*, 20 (1981), pp. 90–105.

[10] Smith, 'The Yorkshire Elections of 1806 and 1807'.

When the representation of the county was split into the three ridings (each returning two MPs) after 1832, the West Riding incorporated much of the land of the leading Whig and Tory magnates who had been so powerful during the Hanoverian period. To the South lay the aristocratic Whigs: Earl Fitzwilliam's Wentworth Woodhouse estate, the South Yorkshire lands of the Earl of Scarborough and the Sheffield parklands of the Duke of Norfolk. In addition, the same wapentake included the estate of the Wortleys of Wharncliffe Hall who had supplied so many Tory candidates for the Yorkshire seats in the past. To the North were the Knaresborough lands of the Duke of Devonshire, a close ally of Fitzwilliam and the estates of the leading Tories: Earl of Harewood; the Aislabies of Studley Royal and of George Lane-Fox of Bramham Park. (See Figure 7.9[11]) In sharp contrast with these extensive rural estates, there were also the powerful urban centres of Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Halifax and Huddersfield to be considered: with competing industrial and political interests. Sheffield, for example was overshadowed by the great estates of Fitzwilliam, Wharncliffe and Norfolk and was a Whig stronghold, whilst the interests of the mostly Tory Leeds' cloth merchants had been a source of worry for the Whigs in the past.[12] For a number of smaller industrial towns with no borough representation, the county constituency represented the best chance available of placing their concerns upon the national political agenda. Towns that fell into this category included Dewsbury, Keighley, Rotherham and Doncaster. Finally, the constituency contained a number of market towns such as Quick, Harrogate and Knaresborough, which served the local agricultural districts thus representing a mixed urban and rural character.

[11] It should be noted that all maps are sketch maps only and are not necessarily to scale.

[12] Smith, *Whig Principles and Party Politics*, p. 302.

The urban 'penetration' of the West Riding amounted to twenty-three per cent of the total electorate. (See Table 7.1) This is a remarkably similar figure to that arrived at by Cannon for the period immediately before 1832, when the urban influence within Yorkshire, as a whole totalled twenty-two per cent.[13]

Table 7.1 Urban influence in the West Riding in 1837.

Township	*Number of Voters*	*Proportion of Total Electorate (%)*
Barnsley	261	0.9
Batley	179	0.6
Bingley	298	1.0
Bradford	363	1.2
Dewsbury	308	1.0
Doncaster	350	1.2
Halifax	264	0.9
Huddersfield	65	0.2
Keighley	337	1.1
Knaresborough	79	0.3
Leeds	1566	5.3
Pontefract	105	0.4
Pudsey	311	1.1
Quick	657	2.2
Ripon	129	0.4
Rotherham	116	0.4
Selby	97	0.3
Settle	72	0.2
Sheffield	865	2.9
Skipton	103	0.3
Wakefield	239	0.8
Wetherby	68	0.2
Total	*6832*	*23.1*

Moore's contention that a prime motive of the architects of the 1832 Reform Act was to eliminate urban influence where possible, is

[13] Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, pp. 295–6.

thus contradicted by the West Riding evidence.[14] Although a few towns which secured parliamentary representation reduced their impact upon the county electorate (it was not possible to use a ten pound borough qualification to obtain a vote in the county as well), urban influence before and after the Reform Act is largely unchanged. Thus, Huddersfield provided only sixty-five county voters (around six hundred could vote in the borough elections); but this diminution of influence is more than compensated by the three hundred plus voters of Keighley and the six hundred voters of Quick who had no alternative borough representation. There is evidence that the leaders of urban society in the Riding were less concerned with the organisation and finance of the county contests, now that they had the borough elections to divert them. Francis Lindley Wood, a leading Whig bemoaned their disinterest, claiming that the Whig aristocracy were left to finance and manage essential tasks such as the registration of voters:

> The manufacturing leaders will not subscribe save in their own polling districts, so that the Central Committee has only to look to the Whig peerage and a few of the landed aristocracy...[15]

The registered electorate exceeded twenty-nine thousand by 1837 and thus the West Riding constituency was larger than the electorate of the whole county prior to 1832. There were six hundred and seventy-seven separate townships ranging from the tiny hamlets such as Lingards in Huddersfield with only one voter to the vast metropolis of Leeds with over fifteen hundred. Despite the formidable array of aristocratic interests the West Riding was viewed by national opinion as a truly open constituency:

> ... with its 30,000 voting men and its unequalled concentration of interest is beyond the reaches of all influences but those which appeal to the conscience and the mind of man. No threats, no frowns, no quarter day, no Christmas bills, no money or money's worth can avail to corrupt so vast and various a legislative army. Here if anywhere is a free election...[16]

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[14] Moore, 'Concession or Cure', pp. 34–59.

[15] Hickleton MSS, A4.35. 6 May 1839, F L Wood to C Wood.

[16] *The Times*, 7 February 1846. Cited in Jowitt, 'Charles Wood', p. 71.

It is difficult to identify a typical county voter in the West Riding. The forty shilling freehold covered a multitude of tenancies, land ownership and leaseholds.[17] The urban electors who probably achieved the qualification using domestic or industrial *buildings* as opposed to *land* were about the same proportion of the total electorate as the fifty-pound tenants-at-will. These voters were enfranchised via the Chandos amendment and they were about a fifth of the total electorate — a sizeable percentage which could explain the closeness of contests and the firm control that the county appeared to be under in the eighteen-thirties.

Table 7.2 The £50 tenants-at-will voters in the West Riding.[18]

Year	*Tenants-at-will*	*Proportion of Total Electorate (%)*
1836	6187	21.1
1842	6774	21.0

There were around three-and-a-half thousand members of the county electorate who fell into the category of substantial landowners. They can be identified from the poll book for the election of a Registrar of Deeds for the West Riding of Yorkshire which took place in 1842.[19] The qualification to be an electors for this contest was to possess freehold lands and tenements to the yearly value of one hundred pounds — a substantial upward leap from the forty shilling franchise of parliamentary elections. There was no registration requirement and thus the poll books lists the 'voterate' rather than the

[17] Indeed few studies, including that of Moore, have looked at individual voters, identifying their status. A recent exception is S W Baskerville, P Adman and K F Beedham, 'The Dynamics of Landlord Influence in English County Elections, 1701–1734: The Evidence from Cheshire', *Parliamentary History*, 12 (1993), pp. 126–42.

[18] Thompson, 'Whigs and Liberals in the West Riding', p. 215.

[19] *An Alphabetical List of the Nobility, Gentry and Clergy.*

electorate.[20] However it can be expected that the turnout was reasonable; both because of the numbers involved, all of whom had their qualifications scrutinised and the fact that around two hundred of the gentry went to the trouble of arranging a 'pair' from the opposite party because they could not attend, reflecting the organisation and commitment of the voters. These more wealthy voters were equally divided between the two parties. In the 1842 election, the Whig candidate, Thomas Hodgson of Wakefield was only thirty-two votes ahead of the Tory, Arthur Lascelles, son of the Earl of Harewood, after four days of polling. The closeness of this contest was mirrored by those involving the whole electorate in the contested parliamentary elections of the eighteen-thirties.

The 1837 contest was the first chance the electors of the West Riding had to exercise their vote in a general election, although there had been a by-election in 1835 when Lord Morpeth was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland. The close relationship between those who had influenced the representation of the old constituency of Yorkshire and those who sought to persuade the new voters of the West Riding is illustrated by the fact that the new MPs for the West Riding in 1832 were the same men who represented Yorkshire earlier in the 1830s. Thus Morpeth and Strickland with the blessing of the Whig magnates in the county were returned as MPs (unopposed in 1832 and 1835) until 1841. However, the picture is not as simple as that. The Tories were not content to remain in their strongholds in the North Riding and were determined to contest the representation for the West Riding; rightly perceiving the West Riding to have taken over the mythical mantle of power once possessed by Yorkshire.

In 1835, John Stuart Wortley challenged Morpeth in the by-election achieving forty per cent of the vote. Wortley was the eldest

[20] This is a term coined by Baskerville, Adman and Beedham. See 'The Dynamics of Landlord Influence', p. 129.

son of Lord Wharncliffe who had been MP for Yorkshire from 1818 until 1826. The Tories raised a general subscription to fight the seat:

> A large sum of money has been subscribed, not to BRIBE such as are UNWILLING, but to ASSIST those that are WILLING to vote with them, and to defray all the expenses of a contested election, which the law will sanction...[21]

This fund ensured that John Stuart Wortley's expenses were in the hundreds rather than thousands of pounds.[22] In the ensuing general election in 1837 the result was even closer:

Table 7.3 The Result of the West Riding election of 1837.

Candidate	*Votes*	*(%)*
Lord Morpeth (Whig)	12576	34.9
Sir George Strickland (Whig)	11892	33.1
Hon. John Stuart Wortley (Tory)	11489	32.0

Wortley was left needing only another one per cent of the total votes cast to unseat Strickland. The results of the election proved to the Tories that they were justified in the expense of contesting the county seat and indeed in the 1841 election the two Tory candidates, Wortley and Edmund Denison, riding on the back of Peel's popularity defeated the two Liberal candidates. Although a commentator on the 1837 election stated that 'this contest caused great excitement throughout the Riding, and the most active exertions were used by the friends and partizans of each candidate to secure their return'[23]; there were active campaigns against landlord interference as this poster, which was a copy of one issued in County Durham, demonstrates:

[21] Tomlinson MSS, number 77. Tory election poster for the West Riding contest in 1835.

[22] *Ibid.*, number 80. John Stuart Wortley's expenses, 1835.

[23] *West Riding Poll Book, 1837* (Wakefield, 1837).

A lesson to landlords — Sir C Colville to his tenants

> Most landlords expect their tenants to vote as they vote. I do not. Ministers gave up the old system of patronage and interest and wish to govern the country by the mature judgement of public opinion. I throw in my mite in furtherance of those views and cheerfully resign a privilege which custom alone can entitle me to. Vote, therefore, as you please, at all elections without consulting me, or even enquiring which way I vote, and be assured you will never hear any complaint from me on the subject. I can claim no merit resigning what does not belong to me. I am not the landlord of your votes, nor do you hold them under me as tenants-at -will. I am not your proxy by any legal assignment; your votes are not pledged to me by any clause in your agreements. You are bound to cultivate your lands well, and keep everything in good order, and to pay your rents punctually. Having done these things completely and honestly, your duty to me is fulfilled, and farther you have no responsibility.[24]

The altruistic opinions expressed here were perhaps idealistic. More typical is the assertive stance taken by Ann Lister of Shibden Hall:

> Womersley mentioned John Pearson — I told him to get his vote if possible but neither A nor I wished anyone to break a promise absolutely made... we should both see to the registering of our tenants to take care of the votes for the future...[25]

The success of these attempts to impose control on a wider scale is debatable. With an electorate that contained a high number of wealthy landowners and a large urban element and one with a substantial degree of social and geographical mobility; it was virtually impossible to keep the electorate under close restraint during contested elections. It is interesting, for example, that the efforts of Ann Lister to establish close control over her tenantry, were mostly in vain — the Shibden Hall estate in the township of Southowram was but a speck of blue in a vast sea of orange territory. The township as a whole was evenly split between the Whig and Tory parties. (See Figure 7.4) Once the Tories began to achieve successes at the revising barristers' courts (for example, they gained over six hundred voters in the 1836 revision of the register); to raise funds and to scent success at the polls, contested elections became inevitable.

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[24] Staveley MSS, DD 115/26.

[25] Lister MSS, SH:7/ML/6, Ann Lister's diaries, 8 May 1835.

Both parties in the constituency endeavoured to maintain, what was increasingly an uneasy balance (largely due to the rising controversy of the Corn Laws) between urban and rural interests. For example, the practice of each of the candidates' two nominees representing the leading aristocratic families of the Riding *and* the leading manufacturers from the important urban centres of the county was followed during the election of 1837. Thus, Lord Morpeth was nominated by Sir Francis Lindley Wood, a member of one of the leading Whig families of the region and Jonathan Akroyd of Halifax, a wealthy mill owner. Sir George Strickland was nominated by Sir Marmaduke Vavasour of Skipton in the north of the constituency and Mr Warburton of Sheffield from the southern metal manufacturing districts. The Tories, also followed suit. John Stuart Wortley was nominated by Edwin Lascelles, son of the Earl of Harewood and John Brooke, a mill owner of Armitage Bridge, near Huddersfield.[26]

Although, the West Riding usually returned aristocratic members during the eighteen-thirties, this could only be achieved with the consent of the leaders of urban society.[27] Thus, when in 1841, the Whigs passed over Sir George Strickland, who had represented the constituency from its inception in 1832 in favour of Lord Milton; John Stuart Wortley, the Tory candidate made much of the abuse of aristocratic privilege and power:

> One, at least of our opponents has suddenly disappeared. The Whig leaders- the would-be 'monopolists of the Riding'-fancy they have another and better resource. They have abandoned Sir George Strickland, who has been repeatedly chosen by the electors, and who has held the representation of the West Riding for several parliaments, without complaint from those by whom he was elected, and they now rely upon a noble name, which I have no wish to disparage. I have not a word to utter against their new candidate or his house, but we can understand the transaction. The party know that their case is hopeless, and they seek to bind you with a name by calling in

[26] *West Riding Poll Book, 1837.*

[27] This aristocratic and middle class alliance was always uneasy and finally broke down with the election of Richard Cobden in place of Lord Milton in the eighteen-forties. See Thompson, 'Whigs and Liberals in the West Riding'.

> the aid of a well-known influence, to repair, if possible, their fallen fortunes. It is for you to say whether the representation of the West Riding shall thus be disposed of...[28]

Wortley's insinuation that the Whigs had somehow abused the trust of the electors by selecting Milton in place of Strickland fell on fertile ground. The West Riding following the national trend unseated its two Whig members and for the first time returned Tories to parliament. The impressive status, influence and wealth that Milton, son and heir of Earl Fitzwilliam, brought to his candidacy could not overturn the more potent force of public opinion.

Table 7.4 Turnouts in the West Riding county election of 1837.[29]

Polling District	*Turnout (%)*
Barnsley	83.4
Bradford	84.1
Dent	71.0
Doncaster	81.2
Halifax	81.6
Huddersfield	82.1
Quick	82.9
Keighley	85.5
Knaresborough	82.3
Leeds	88.7
Pateley Bridge	82.0
Settle	82.4
Sheffield	82.6
Skipton	83.2
Snaith	83.5
Wakefield	78.2

Note: These are the actual, unadjusted figures for turnout per polling district

Voter turnout was high throughout the county in 1837, demonstrating the importance of this first West Riding contest at a general election. (See Table 7.4) Surprisingly, one of the lowest

[28] Busfeild Ferrand MSS, 51D79/147. 26 May 1841, Tory election poster.

[29] Source: *West Riding Poll Book, 1837.*

turnouts was in the polling district of Wakefield, which is where the contest was held. The novelty of voting in a general election for the first time for many voters was obviously a powerful attraction. If Thompson's figures for the number of voters is correct though — he considered that the dead, duplicated and departed voters meant that the registered electorate could be reduced by ten per cent — the turnout figures are phenomenal.[30]

These county turnout figures are more spectacular than many of those for the borough elections during the eighteen-thirties.[31] What has to be ascertained, is whether the closeness of the election is due to the independence of the voters characterised by the high turnout and interest in the election or whether, conversely the result was swung by a number of voters acting in consort with their landlord's wishes — thus the outcome of the election hinged on which landlords could mobilise their tenants most effectively.

Deference versus independence

One way to measure the amount of landlord-voter dependency is to look at unanimity rates among townships. This is a measure pioneered by Moore and imitated by other historians to measure whether there were territorial blocks which acted in harmony with each other.[32] It can only be a simplistic measure of looking at landlord influence because the 'villages' or in the case of the West Riding, the townships did not often correspond to estate boundaries. One landed

[30] Thompson, 'Whigs and Liberals in the West Riding', p. 215.

[31] For a discussion of participation rates in general and for borough turnout figures, see Chapter III.

[32] See for example, Moore, *The Politics of Deference*; O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in Unreformed England'; Speck, Gray and Hopkinson, 'Computer Analysis of Poll Books' and Baskerville, Adman and Beedham, 'The Dynamics of Landlord Influence'.

Table 7.5 Unanimity rates in the West Riding election of 1837.

Polling District	*No. of Townships*	*Unanimous Townships*	*%*
Barnsley	43	10	23.3
Bradford	39	4	10.3
Dent	3	–	–
Doncaster	67	18	26.8
Halifax	23	–	–
Huddersfield	33	1	3.0
Quick	4	–	–
Keighley	12	4	33.3
Knaresborough[a]	93	19	20.4
Leeds[b]	64	14	21.9
Pateley Bridge[c]	38	9	23.7
Settle	49	4	8.2
Sheffield[d]	36	12	33.3
Skipton	44	8	18.2
Snaith	51	14	27.4
Wakefield[e]	70	9	12.9
Total	*677*	*126*	*18.6*

[a] = Plus three townships which returned no voters
[b] = Plus one township which returned no voters
[c] = Plus one township which returned no voters
[d] = Plus one township which returned no voters
[e] = Plus two townships which returned no voters

estate could cross the boundaries of more than one township or one township could contain many estates within its territory. Thus, the Whig Earl of Rosslyn's estates within the township of Follifoot in the Knaresborough polling district were bordered by those of Sir Joseph Radcliffe, a Tory of Rudding Park. In 1837, the township displayed a unanimity rate of seventy-seven per cent, in the Tory interest. (See Figure 7.6 and Table 7.9) The key to the reason for the electorate of the township overwhelmingly supporting the Tory party rather than the Whigs could lie in the fact that the Earl of Rosslyn's West Riding properties were a small part of his country-wide landed estates and he

was a largely absent landlord. Sir Joseph Radcliffe lived and worked alongside his tenants and Rudding Park was his only property. A clear demonstration of the fact that merely to *possess* substantial tracts of land would not alone enable proprietors to encourage their tenantry to vote in their interest. Loyalty and deference did not come parcelled up with the deeds to landed estates but had to be earned and nurtured.

Nevertheless the unanimity rates in the West Riding are spectacular. (See Table 7.5) In the large, amorphous county of the West Riding of Yorkshire, for a fifth of the townships to display complete concurrence illustrates that some measure of electoral influence must be at work — whether it is 'illegal' landlord intervention; the politics of deference or the 'legitimate' power of the canvass and popular participation needs to be further investigated.

In the seventeen counties that O'Gorman looks at between 1734 and 1831, the highest average number of voters per 'village' is thirty-three (Yorkshire in 1807).[33] The effect of the 1832 Reform Act upon the West Riding is clear — the average number of voters per township rises by a third and there are several polling districts with an average of over hundred voters per township. (See Table 7.6) In these circumstances the high levels of uniformity displayed by the voters is even more remarkable. It is clear that polling districts with a large number of small townships (for example, Knaresborough or Pateley Bridge) do not necessarily have high unanimity rates. In fact, Sheffield

[33] O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in Unreformed England', p. 429.

Table 7.6 Average numbers of electors per township.

Polling District	*No. of Townships*	*No. of Voters*	*Average per Township*
Barnsley	43	1389	32.3
Bradford	39	3856	98.8
Dent	3	357	119.0
Doncaster	67	1891	28.2
Halifax	23	2321	100.9
Huddersfield	33	2000	60.6
Quick	4	845	211.2
Keighley	12	929	77.4
Knaresborough	96	1556	16.2
Leeds	65	3832	58.9
Pateley Bridge	39	991	25.4
Settle	49	1445	29.5
Sheffield	37	2645	71.5
Skipton	40	1168	29.2
Snaith	51	1123	22.0
Wakefield	72	3000	41.6
Total	*677*	*29346*	*43.3*

with an average of seventy-one voters per township has one of the highest unanimity rates at thirty-three per cent. The so-called 'village-voting' phenomenon has rightly been criticised in the past because it over emphasises the importance of tiny villages or townships within the massive county electorates — to get agreement amongst the fifteen hundred voters of Leeds would be extraordinary but to achieve the concordance of the four voters of Parlington is distinctly less impressive.[34] Indeed most of the West Riding townships that record unanimous returns have less than ten voters but there were exceptions: East Keswick in the Leeds polling district recorded twenty-three Tory

[34] Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, p. 27–9.

votes and the township of North and South Anston (Sheffield Polling district) achieved unanimity among its thirty-one voting inhabitants.

The converse of unanimity is, of course, dissidence. O'Gorman developed a system of measuring dissident rates in townships and villages within counties as a further device to test the boundaries of deference communities.[35]

Table 7.7 Rates of dissidence in the West Riding election of 1837.

Polling District	*Electorate*	*Votes cast*	*Dissident Votes (%)*
Barnsley	1389	1765	29.2
Bradford	3856	5307	22.6
Dent	357	400	29.4
Doncaster	1891	2292	31.3
Halifax	2321	3147	20.9
Huddersfield	2000}	3694	25.0
Quick	845}		
Keighley	929	1219	25.4
Knaresborough	1556	1680	22.4
Leeds	3832	4052	26.6
Pateley Bridge	991	1211	33.3
Settle	1445	1594	25.0
Sheffield	2645	3466	28.5
Skipton	1168	1547	26.2
Snaith	1123	1161	19.5
Wakefield	3000	3675	32.6

Note: Huddersfield and Quick Polling Districts made joint returns

The dissidence rates within the West Riding constituency are somewhat higher than those calculated by O'Gorman which average at around nineteen per cent. (See Table 7.7) Thus the West Riding presents an interesting paradox — high dissidence and high unanimity

[35] O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in Unreformed England'.

rates. The explanation for this lies very much in probing the dissidence and unanimity figures more closely.

One problem with using the figures from the West Riding election of 1837 is that it was a three-cornered contest with two Whigs and one Tory candidate. The difficulty lies (as O'Gorman acknowledges) in deciding what constitutes dissidence and how to measure it accurately. It was electoral 'good practice' for landowners to insist that their tenants used one of their two votes to support the 'official' candidate but they were free to exercise their own preference with the other vote. The implication of this custom is that the intention behind split voting is very difficult to decipher. Were voters determined to make use of their two votes? Were they expressing independence from their landlord's influence? Were they immune to the trend towards party voting? Were they declaring their dissatisfaction with the alternative candidate from the same party? In three-cornered contests the split voting rate is usually higher because of the voters' tendency to use both their votes and the single candidate had to work hard to convince his supporters to plump for him. In the West Riding election the number of split votes was low — 1.5 per cent — but the figures could have a crucial bearing in determining both dissidence and unanimity rates. If it is accepted that a landlord could only hope to influence his tenant in one of his two votes, then a split vote could mean that a tenant was concurring with his landlord's wishes — thus the unanimity rates rise and the dissidence rates fall.

The pattern of high unanimity rates and high dissidence rates helps to illustrate the incidence of so called open and closed villages. The 1837 contest was a close one with Wortley, the Conservative candidate needing only four hundred votes or one per cent of votes cast to unseat Sir George Strickland and thus with three candidates who were equally attractive to the voters landlord influence was bound to

Table 7.8 Rates of unanimity and dissidence in the West Riding election of 1837 (including split votes).

Polling District	*Uniform Townships (%)*	*Dissident Votes Cast (%)*
Barnsley	23.3	20.3
Bradford	10.3	19.6
Dent	–	25.0
Doncaster	26.8	26.2
Halifax	–	18.2
Huddersfield	3.0	23.9
Quick	–	
Keighley	33.3	22.3
Knaresborough	20.4	18.8
Leeds	21.9	22.4
Pateley Bridge	23.7	30.8
Settle	8.2	22.1
Sheffield	33.3	20.6
Skipton	18.2	21.4
Snaith	27.4	15.7
Wakefield	12.9	27.8

play a deciding role where that was possible. Territorial patterns of voting behaviour are clearly discernible. (See Figures 7.1 to 7.8) In spite of its reputation as a Whig stronghold, the cautious optimism of the Tories in the eighteen-thirties was justified. The eastern half of the riding is a swathe of blue, whilst the Whigs are concentrated in their urban strongholds in the west and south. The West Riding does not give support to the trend noticed by those noted early psephologists of the nineteenth century, Cox and Grady, who wrote that: 'a manufacturing district generally inclines towards radicalism'.[36] Although, the agricultural districts to the north and east of the county and the rural market towns were usually Tory; many urban industrial manufacturing centres also supported the Conservative party. The trend is particularly noticable in the Barkston Ash and Skyrack wapentakes which included

[36] E W Cox and S G Grady, *The New Law and Practice of Elections* (London, 1868), p cxlvii.

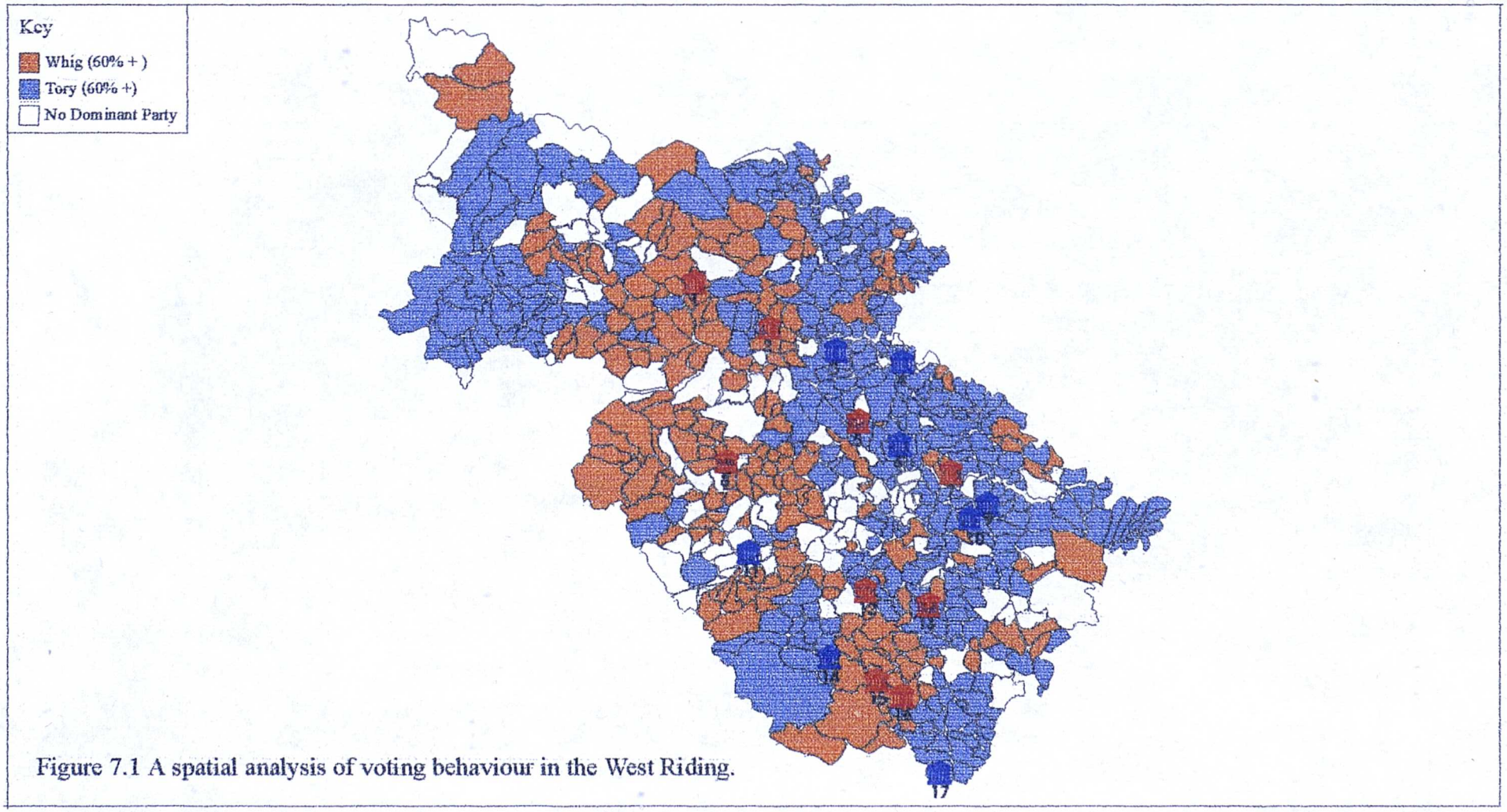

Figure 7.1 A spatial analysis of voting behaviour in the West Riding.

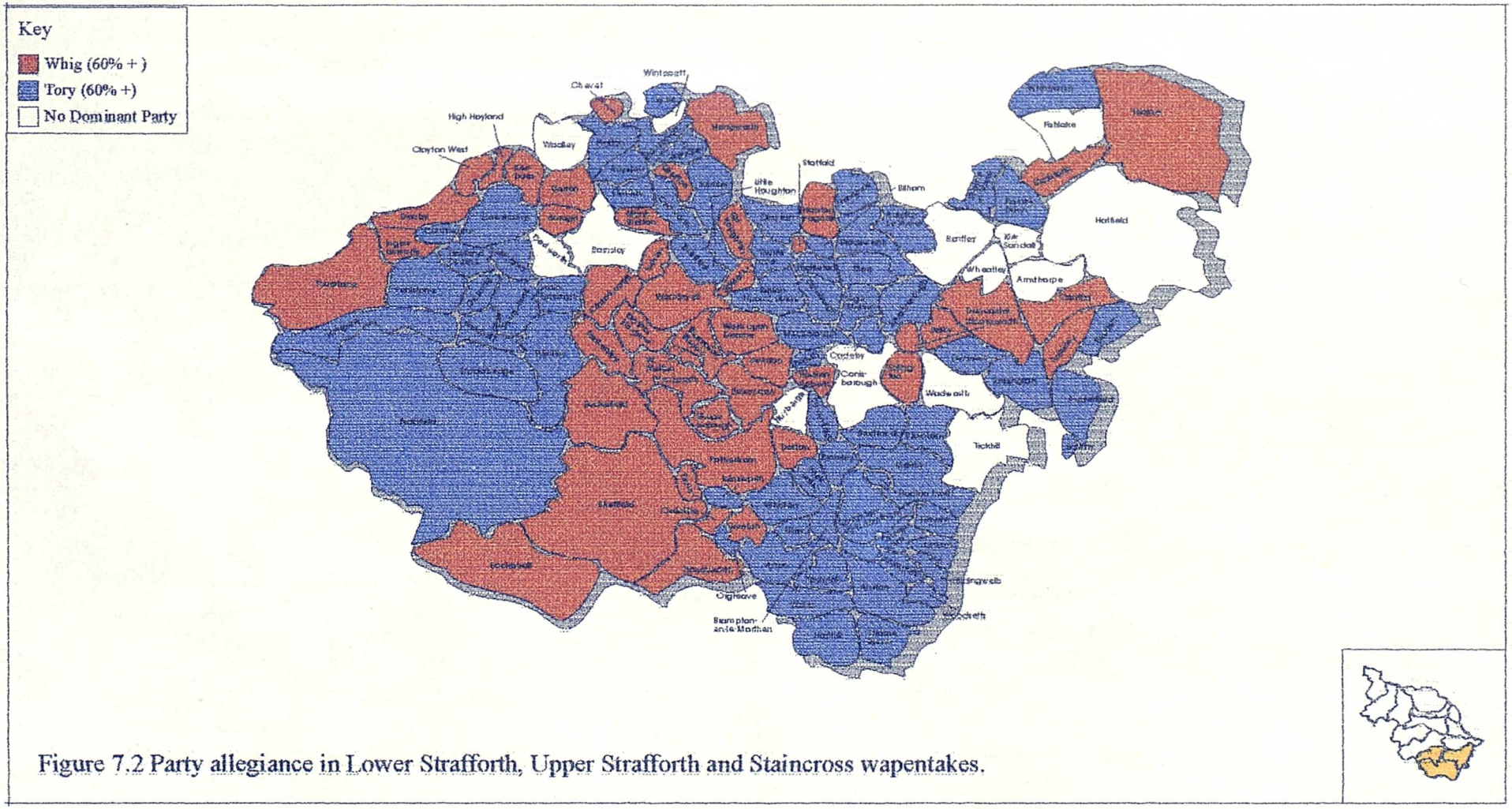

Figure 7.2 Party allegiance in Lower Strafforth, Upper Strafforth and Staincross wapentakes.

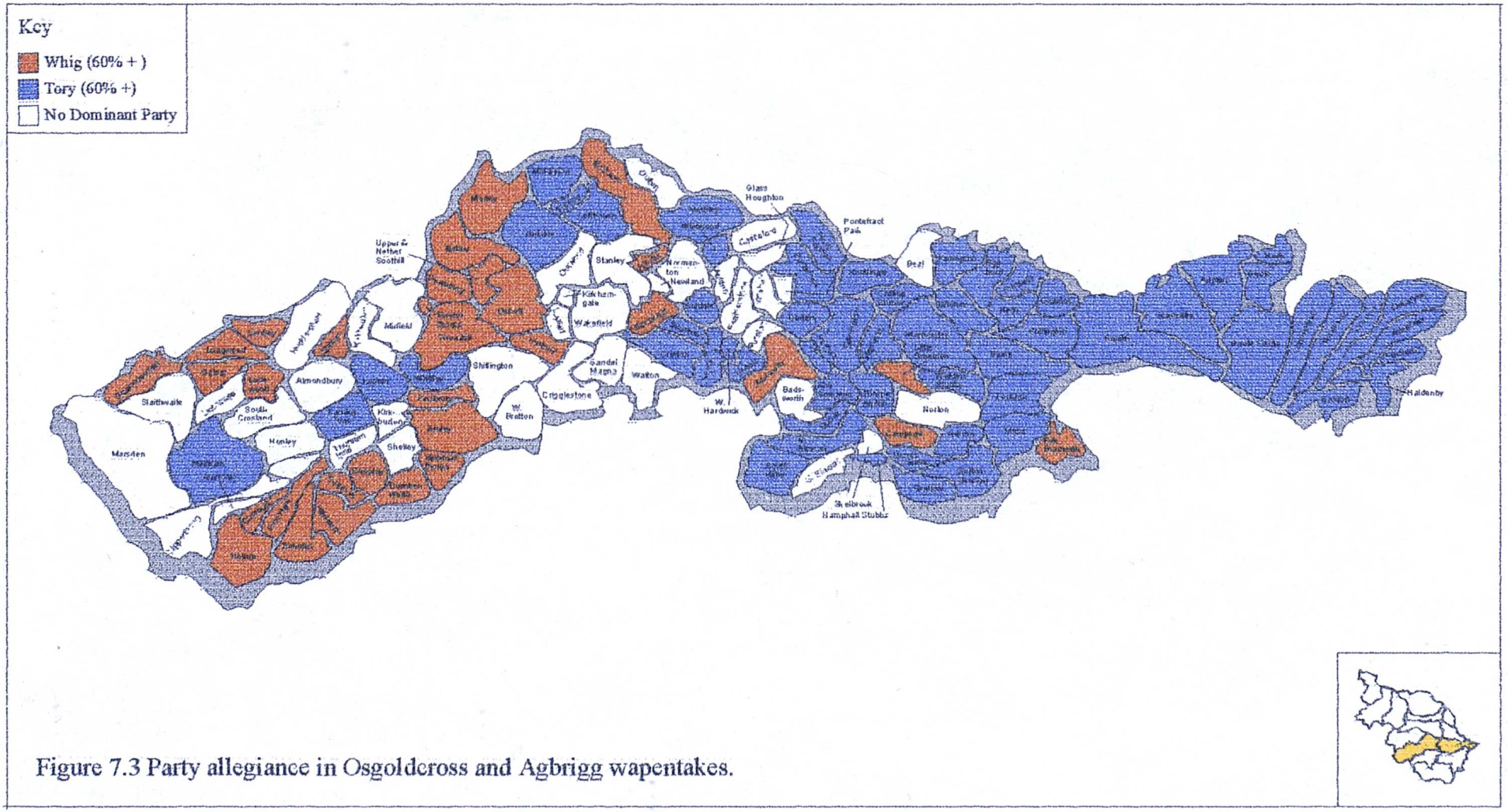

Figure 7.3 Party allegiance in Osgoldcross and Agbrigg wapentakes.

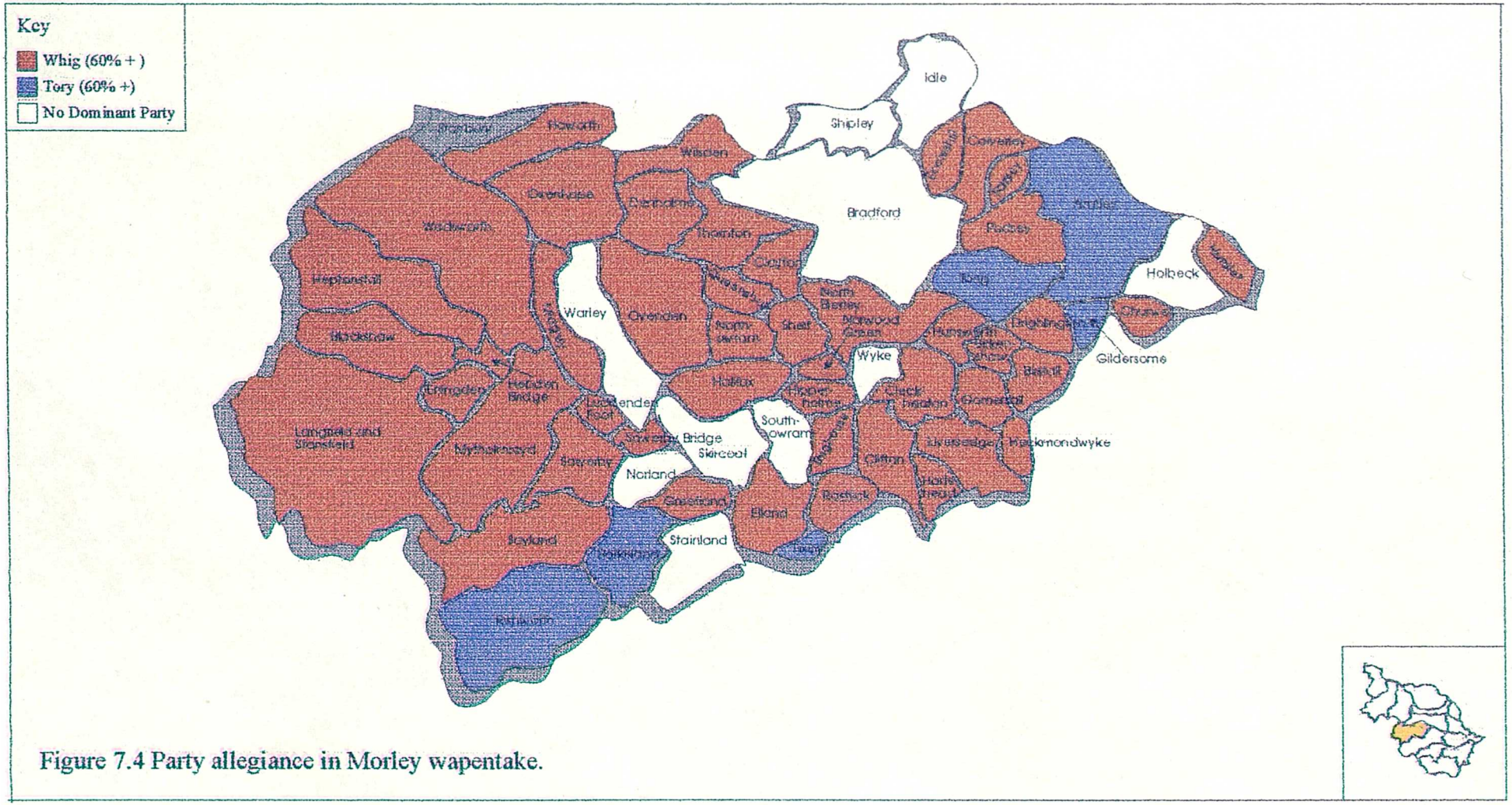

Figure 7.4 Party allegiance in Morley wapentake.

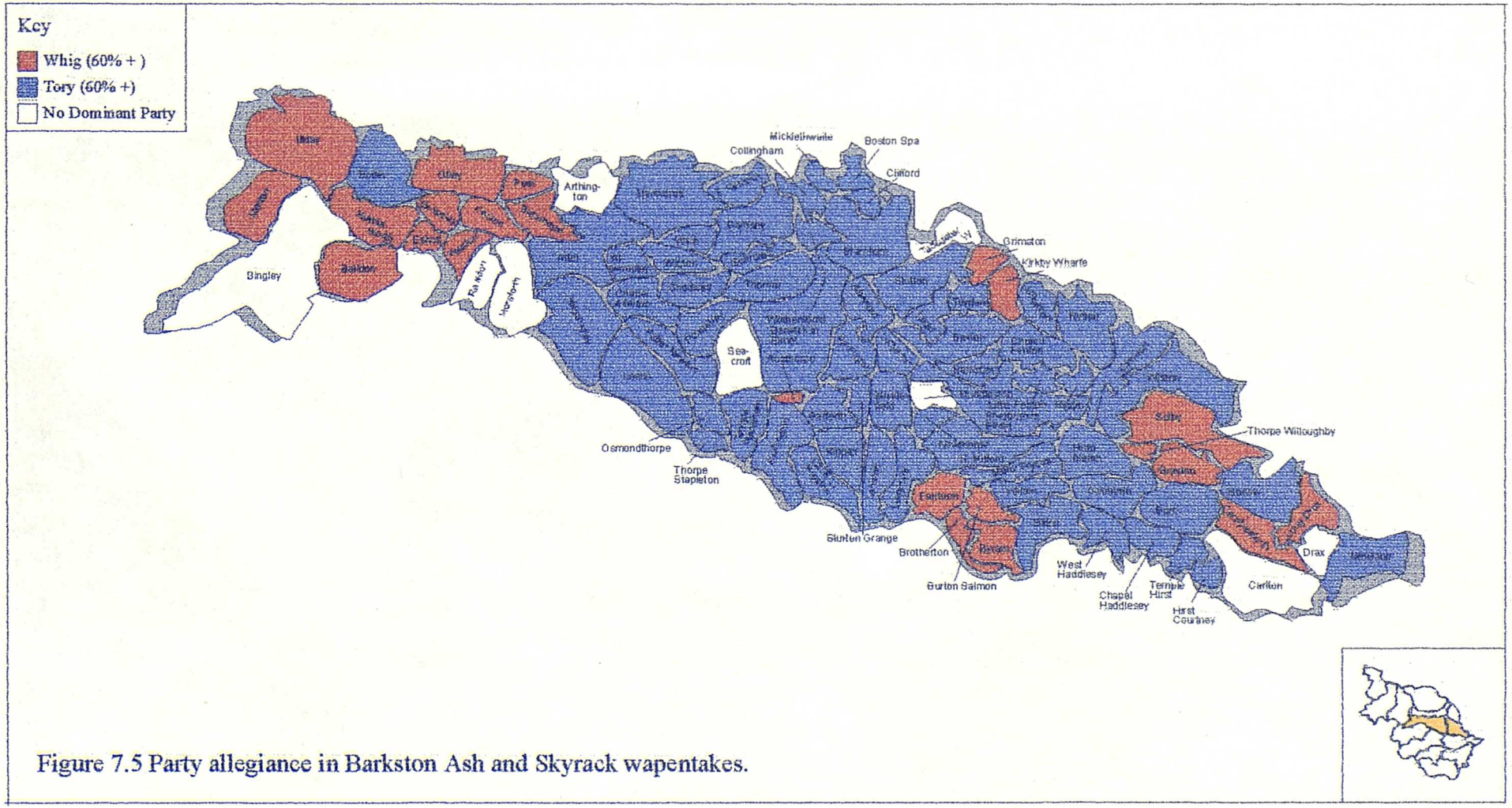

Figure 7.5 Party allegiance in Barkston Ash and Skyrack wapentakes.

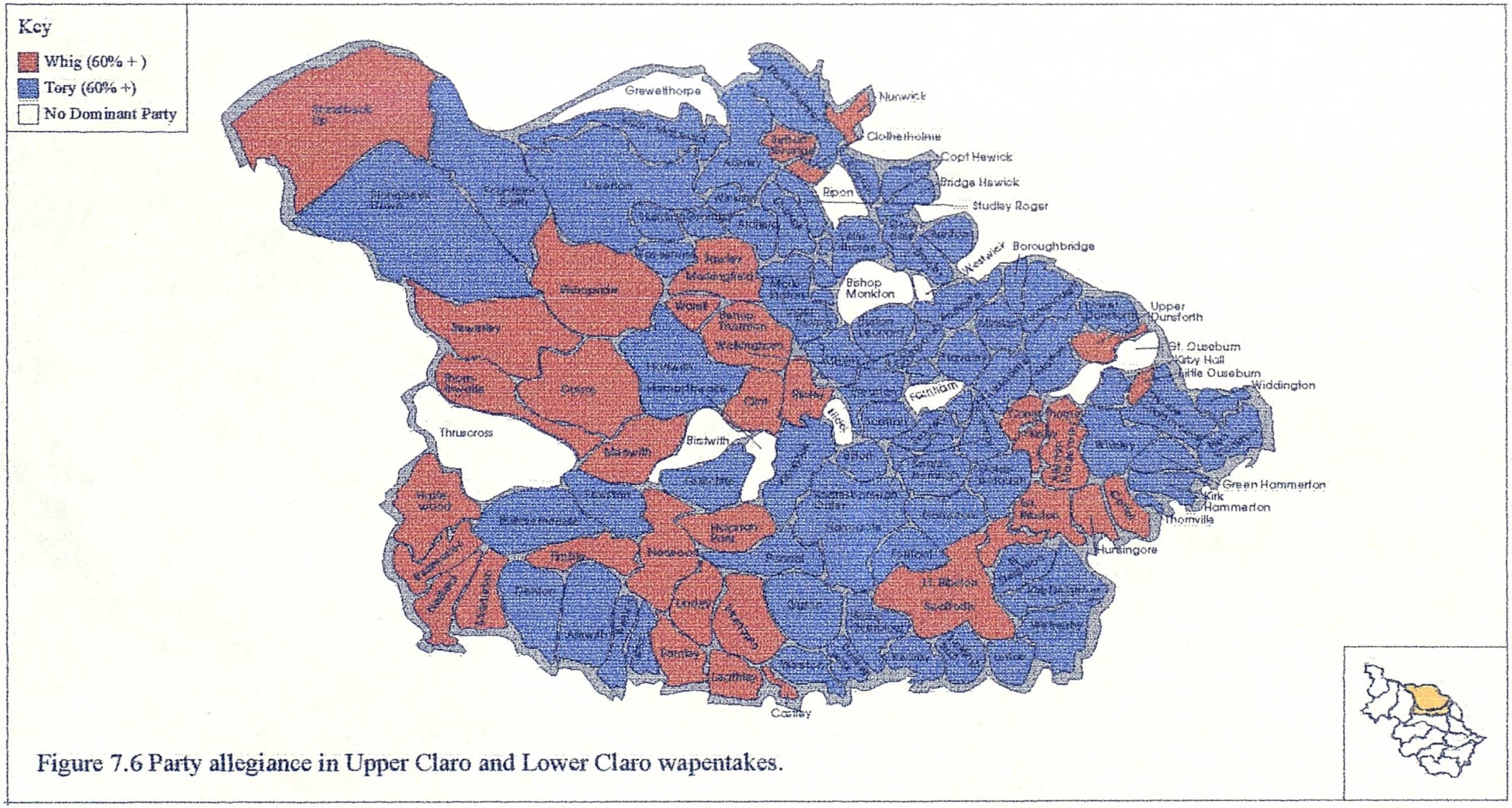

Figure 7.6 Party allegiance in Upper Claro and Lower Claro wapentakes.

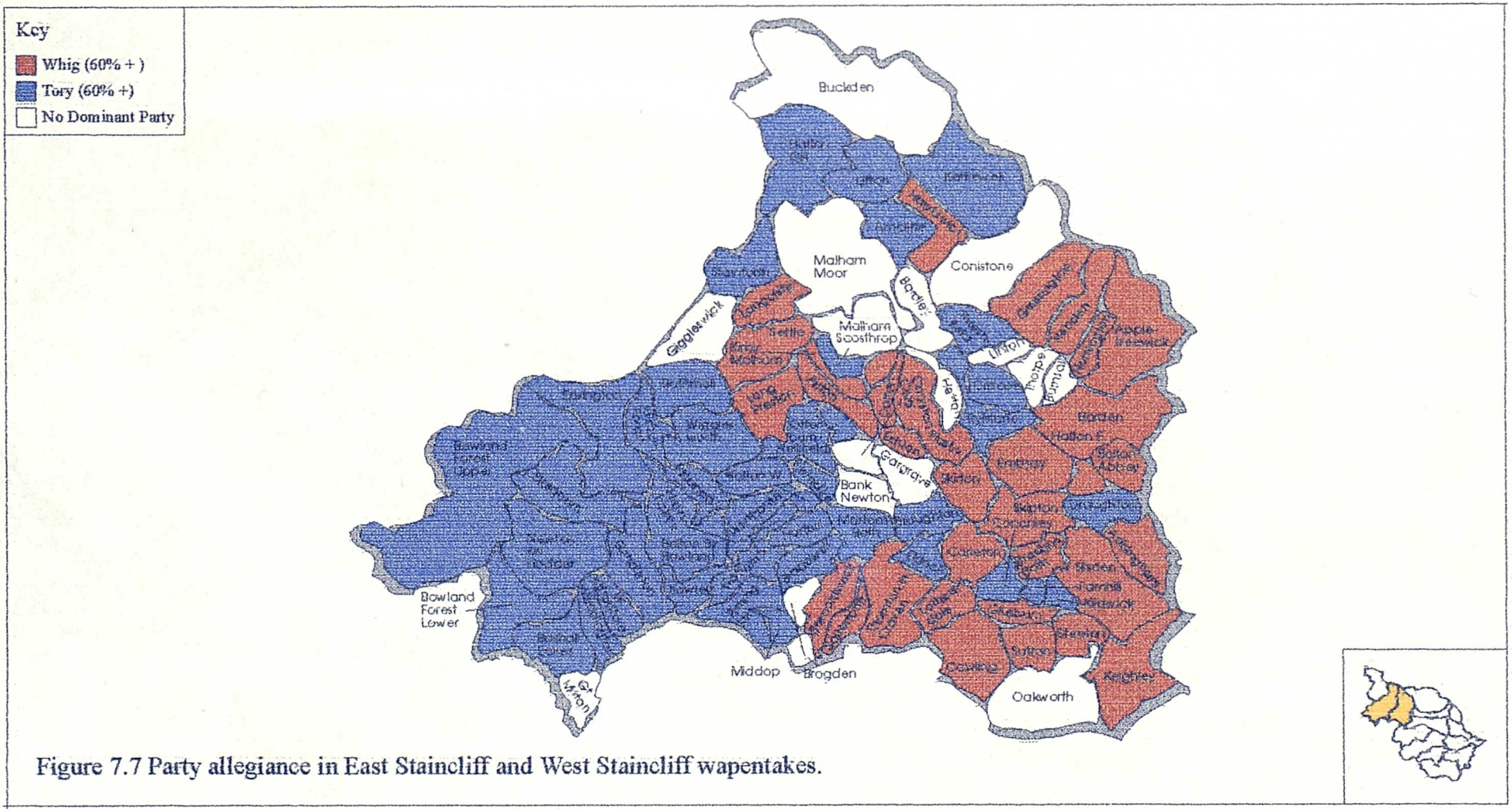

Figure 7.7 Party allegiance in East Staincliff and West Staincliff wapentakes.

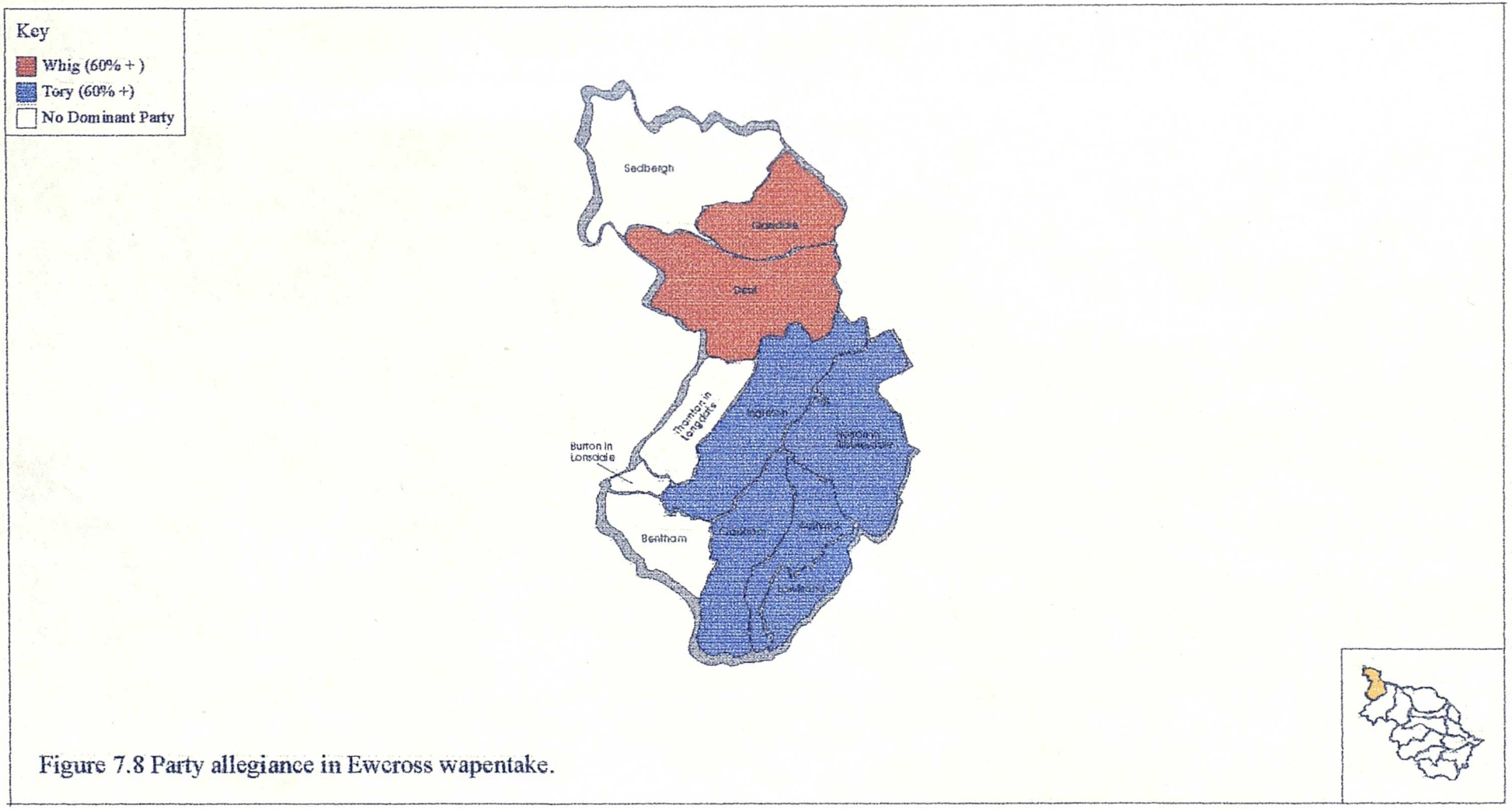

Figure 7.8 Party allegiance in Ewcross wapentake.

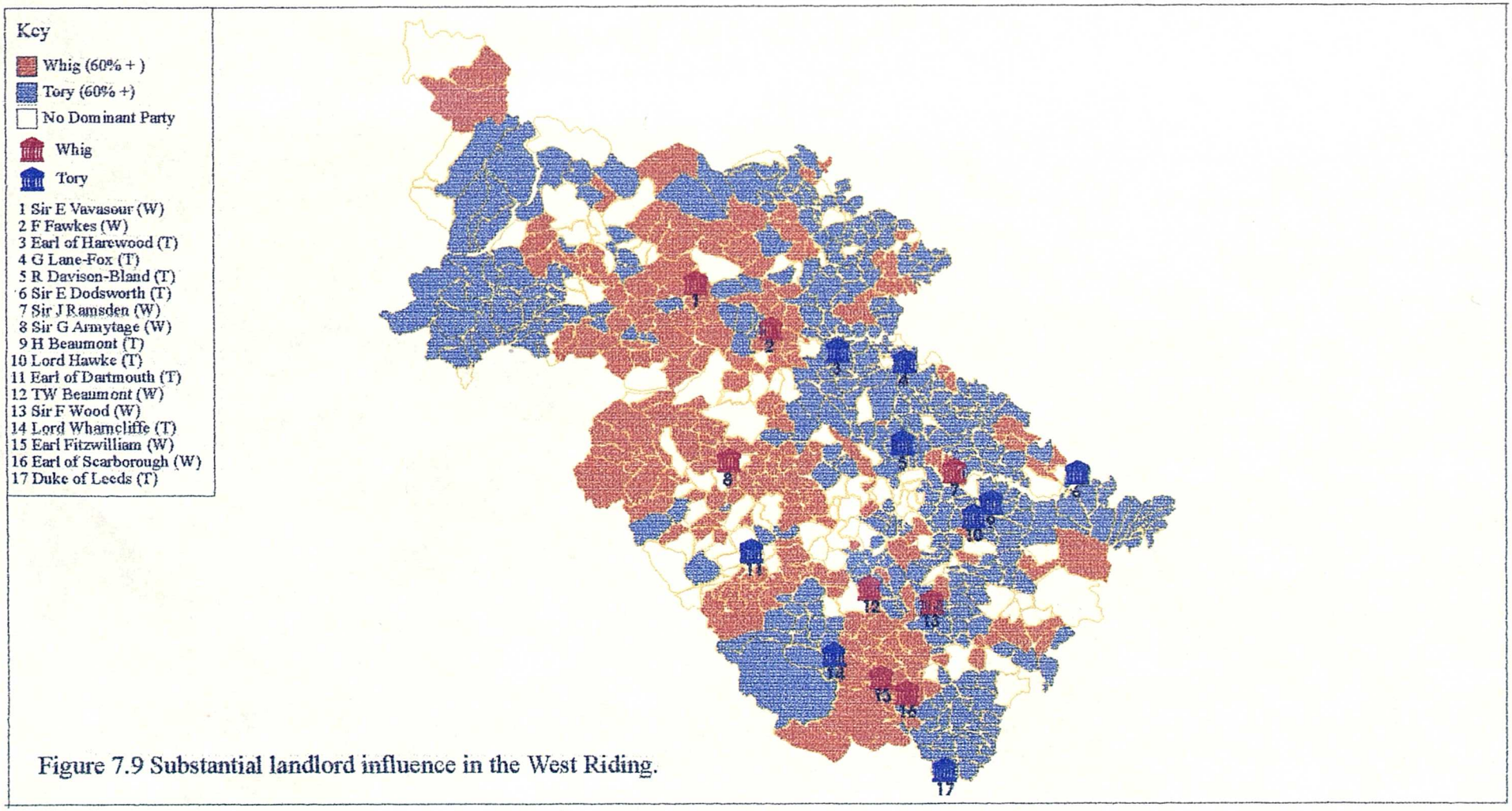

Figure 7.9 Substantial landlord influence in the West Riding.

Table 7.9 Substantial landowner influence in the West Riding.

Landowner	*Township*	*Polling District*	*Voting Preference*	*Township Accord (%)*
William Aldam	Warmsworth	Doncaster	Whig	71.3
Sir G Armytage	Hipperholme	Halifax	Whig	71.3
Rev. G Athorpe	Dinnington	Sheffield	Tory	100.0
Henry Barton	Stapleton	Wakefield	Tory	75.0
Henry Beaumont	Whitley	Huddersfield	Tory	88.5
Lord Beaumont	Carlton	Snaith	Whig	70.6
T W Beaumont	Bretton	Barnsley	Whig	100.0
R. Davison-Bland	Kippax	Leeds	Tory	82.1
B Brooksbank	Tadcaster	Leeds	Unknown	62.7 (T)
John W. Childers	Cantley	Doncaster	Whig	70.5
Phillip Bryan Cooke	Owston	Doncaster	Unknown	100.0 (T)
Sir W Cooke	Doncaster	Doncaster	Whig	66.7
Sir J Copley	Sprotbrough	Doncaster	Unknown	86.5 (T)
John Coulthurst	Gargrave	Skipton	Tory	45.9
Ralph Creyke	Rawcliffe	Snaith	Tory	88.2
John Dalton	Sleningford	Pateley Bridge	Tory	66.7
Earl of Dartmouth	Farnley Tyas	Huddersfield	Tory	83.3
Francis Fawkes	Farnley	Bradford	Whig	100.0
Edward Ferrand	Bingley	Keighley	Tory	48.8
Earl Fitzwilliam	Wentworth	Barnsley	Whig	69.8
John Fullerton	Thrybergh	Doncaster	Unknown	50.0
Earl of Harewood	Harewood	Leeds	Tory	92.8
George Lane-Fox	Bramham	Leeds	Tory	96.9
James Lister	Ousefleet	Snaith	Tory	100.0
Sir C Lowther	Swillington	Leeds	Tory	75.0
Earl of Mexborough	Methley	Wakefield	Tory	83.2
Sir L Pilkington	Chevet	Wakefield	Whig	66.7
Sir J Radcliffe	Follifoot	Knaresborough	Tory	77.7
Sir J Ramsden	Byram	Wakefield	Whig	100.0
Earl of Scarborough	Rotherham	Sheffield	Whig	75.0
John Todd	Campsall	Doncaster	Whig	66.7
Sir E Vavasour	Hazlewood	Skipton	Whig	100.0
Charles Winn	Foulby	Wakefield	Tory	100.0
Sir F L Wood	Hickleton	Doncaster	Whig	100.0

the rapidly expanding urban centre of Leeds. (See Figure 7.5) Apart from the more radical towns of Ilkley and Selby and Sir John Ramsden's country estate at Byram, the two wapentakes are

overwhelmingly Tory in their politics. The major manufacturing towns of Halifax and Sheffield were strongly Whig in their political composition but these more radical centres can be contrasted with the ambivalent status of Barnsley, Bingley, Bradford, Featherstone, Huddersfield, Marsden and Wakefield. There can be no simplistic generalisations applied to the county electorate of the West Riding and the county and borough voters each display separate and different patterns of voting behaviour.

In order to demonstrate landlord influence over these closed villages, the voting preferences of a number of substantial West Riding landowners was examined along with those of the voters in the townships adjacent to their estates. (See Table 7.9 and Figure 7.9) Each estate was hundreds, if not thousands of acres and thus there is an attempt to concentrate on those landowners whose influence could make a difference to the result.

It is obvious from this evidence that there were substantial blocks of territory where the voting preference of the landlord was echoed by his near neighbours, clients and tenants. This illustration of the territorial blocks of influence is supported by the spatial analysis of the total county electorate. (See Figure 7.1)

The West Riding was not a typical county constituency of the 1830s, but in many ways that makes the high unanimity rates and vast territorial Whig and Tory blocks more persuasive. It is true that there is no evidence of any of these landowners using 'illegitimate' means of controlling their neighbours but it is equally true that in a county that had the competing interests of the landed aristocracy; rural agricultural worker; urban conglomerates and a whole host of 'proto-industrial' independent skilled craftsmen that the ability to command absolute loyalty from a large number of voters was going to be the determining factor deciding the outcome of an election — especially in the close

contests of the 1830s. Thus it appears that it was this 'loyalty bonus' that turned the West Riding elections into contests which would be determined in the rolling pastures rather than the textile mills and metal workshops of the industrial towns.

There are important contra-indications to this evidence however. The spectacularly high turnouts, the high levels of dissidence voting and the welter of propaganda, pamphlets, posters and handbills, imply that public opinion had an equally important role to play in elections. Popular participation was an important element of county contests. The election riot which took place during the contest of 1837 demonstrating the high public excitement and involvement with the campaign. Perhaps in a constituency the size of the West Riding, the unanimity rates are less surprising when the fact that the voters had to be got to the polling booths at Wakefield is taken into consideration. In some of the small villages and townships of the Riding it is probable that transport to Wakefield was arranged locally and all electors travelled together, at the expense of the candidates or of their landlord. Neither the size of the unanimous votes nor the blocks of landed influence could compete in numerical terms with the arrival at the polls in 1837 of Richard Oastler heading a vast army of manufacturing workers protesting against the inhumane conditions in the mills and factories of the West Riding. Deference had its place in county contests after 1832 but it was only one element of many that determined a voter's choice.

Chapter VIII

A Celebration of Post-reform Politics in the West Riding

There should be no threnodies written for the 1832 Reform Act. Its implementation in the West Riding demonstrates the fact that it was the agent that *empowered* sections of the community. Obviously, there were sections of the population who were excluded from the franchise; but just as they had found the means to play a role in the electoral politics of Hanoverian England, the labouring classes and women of all ranks carved themselves out a niche and participated dramatically in the contests that took place in the eighteen-thirties.

The first point that should be made is that their ability to participate in elections was greatly enhanced after 1832. In the West Riding, for example, it was normal in the eighteen-thirties for constituencies to be contested; in the earlier period elections were rarely contested. Secondly, the organisation of electoral activity was appreciably improved by the Reform Act. Registration brought with it an ability for the political parties, campaign groups, individual patrons and electors or the mass of the unenfranchised to identify voters with a high degree of accuracy. The annual round at the revising barristers' courts was written in to the calendar of political activity. Voters and potential voters could now be targeted as never before and thus the canvassing techniques of patrons and the unrepresented alike were sharpened and honed in this new political climate. The process of politicisation that had run in tandem with the Reform crisis encouraged a confident and articulate working class in the newly enfranchised urban boroughs to take an active part during election proceedings. Candidates on the hustings, who had always been subject to light-

hearted banter and more aggressive heckling now had to face a prolonged period of close, public questioning on their past conduct and present policies. It is no coincidence that these question and answer sessions were often led by the same men who had taken a leading role in the Political Unions during the reform agitation. The provincial press that had flourished in the early years of the nineteenth century acted both as a mouthpiece, popularising this participative politics and in many cases as an initiator and organiser of political campaigns. Thirdly, the main beneficiaries of the political polarisation that had occurred during the passing of the Reform Act and of the increased organisation of elections were the political parties. The electorate were highly sensitised to the political messages of the main parties and this manifested itself in their almost universal partisanship. Most electors voted on a straight party ticket and plumping, once the action of only the most dedicated voter had become the norm in three-cornered contests. The country-wide electoral significance of single national issues which had occurred in the contests of 1831 and 1832 was continued throughout the decade. Local issues remained central but candidates could expect to get grilled upon the major national and international questions of the day. The Poor Law Amendment Act, factory reform, the repeal of the Corn Laws, religious and civil reform and the treatment of foreign imports were the staple diet of election posters, handbills and candidate's addresses and speeches in the eighteen-thirties. Indeed there were few that remained entirely local in character and that did *not* contain some of the above elements.

In summary, it appears as if the fears of the influential West Riding Tory magnate, Lord Wharncliffe were realised after 1832. In 1831 he wrote to his son, James Stuart Wortley, the future member for the West Riding:

> ...the effect of this proposed measure is... that no man can enter the House but on a popular election, and to insure that election, he must begin by courting the people; and once elected, every vote he gives (if he looks to a re-election) must be influenced by a bias to that part of our institutions... I

> deny that these alterations, supposing them *really* to have the effect of placing the elective franchise in the hands of the middle classes, would be sufficient to protect us against an excess of Popular influence in the House of Commons... No man can ever stand for representation but upon the ground of Popular Principles, more or less of a decided character...[1]

Of course, not every election was a 'Popular' election. Proprietary boroughs remained and some, such as Huddersfield, were created by the Reform Act. The vast electorates of Sheffield and Leeds were matched by the mini boroughs such as Knaresborough and Ripon, where the number of voters barely surpassed two or three hundred. Even in these constituencies however, the role of the people has been clearly demonstrated — not continuously in every election, but with occasional symbolic and dramatic significance, acting as a brake against unfettered influence. Even the most powerful patrons were obliged to act with caution in this climate of participative politics.

The critics of post-Reform politics, in their desire to counter the black propaganda of past decades which designated the unreformed electorate as venal and corrupt; have emphasised the failures of 1832. Politics was not democratic. It has been argued that it was *less* democratic than in the century before, largely because the electoral 'pool' from which the voters were drawn was narrowed down and because the regimentation of politics after 1832 closed off public participation.[2] Although, it is true that the post-reform electorates were far from representative (they were never designed to be so) there were important new interests that were now incorporated into the body politic. The populations of the great manufacturing centres now returned their own representatives to Parliament. In the century before 1832, a few hundred voters in Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield and Sheffield were able to exercise their prerogative to return members to parliament at a general election on precisely three occasions; and then only as a small sub-section of an immense county

[1] Cited in Grosvenor and Beilby, *The First Lady Wharncliffe*, pp. 62–3.

[2] O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 199 and Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 331–9.

electorate.[3] After 1832, thousands of voters in these new boroughs *regularly* voted to send their own MPs to London, directly to express their interests. It has been established that these larger boroughs in the West Riding were icons of middle class independence; beacons of success for the towns' elites. This can be interpreted as an unhealthy narrowing of interests but should not be. Just as it is accepted that deference had its place but also its limits, in both pre- and post-reform electoral politics; it should also be recognised that independence too had its boundaries in the early nineteenth century.[4] The fact that popular participation continued to flourish within the confines of the elective franchise should be celebrated rather than regretfully observed as an indication of the undemocratic nature of politics. Officially, the franchise was confined to a small elite but in practice the inclusion of the unenfranchised in the political procedures and processes continued, at least as successfully as in the unreformed era.

For the voters of the West Riding, the 1832 Reform Act was an opportunity. For the first time many sections of the community not only possessed the right to vote but had the chance to exercise that privilege. New vistas of political activity were opened up. Those who were excluded from the franchise by the Act had lost nothing and indeed were no worse off than before. They had gained however, as a result of the reform crisis, a heightened political awareness and a confidence with which to express their views. Both elements were rapidly exercised during early election contests, during the campaigns against the new poor law and for factory reform and most importantly during the Chartist agitation at the end of the decade. Electorates in constituencies that had existed before the Reform Act also benefited. For the first time, many were able to challenge, with varying degrees of success, long-established proprietary interests. For the voters of these

[3] The elections were those of 1734, 1807 and 1830. Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, p. 279.

[4] For the boundaries of deference see: O'Gorman, 'Electoral deference in Unreformed England' and Fisher, 'The Limits of Deference'.

boroughs as well as those in the larger constituencies, 1832 marked the dawn of a new political era.

Appendix I

Candidates and Results from the West Riding Constituencies, 1832–1841

West Riding

1832	Viscount Morpeth (l)	
	Sir George Strickland (l)	
1835	Viscount Morpeth (l)	
	Sir George Strickland (l)	

On Lord Morpeth being appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, new writ April 20th

1835	Viscount Morpeth (l)	9,066
	Hon. John Stuart Wortley (c)	6,259
1837	Viscount Morpeth (l)	12,576
	Sir George Strickland (l)	11,892
	Hon. John Stuart Wortley (c)	11,489
1841	Hon. John Stuart Wortley (c)	13,165
	Edmund Beckett Denison (c)	12,780
	Viscount Milton (l)	12,080
	Viscount Morpeth (l)	12,031

Bradford

1832	Ellis Cunliffe Lister (l)	650
	John Hardy (l)	471
	George Banks (c)	402

1835	John Hardy (l-c)	611
	Ellis Cunliffe Lister (l)	589
	George Hadfield (l)	392
1837	Ellis Cunliffe Lister (l)	635
	William Busfeild (l)	621
	John Hardy (l-c)	443
	William Busfeild jr (c)	383
1841	John Hardy (c)	612
	Ellis Cunliffe Lister (l)	540
	William Busfeild jr (c)	536

On death of Lister, new writ September 8th

1841	William Busfeild jr (c)	526
	William Wilberforce (c)	522

Halifax

1832	Rawdon Briggs jr (l)	242
	Charles Wood (l)	235
	Michael Stocks (l)	186
	Hon. James Stuart Wortley (c)	174
1835	Charles Wood (l)	336
	Hon. James Stuart Wortley (c)	308
	Edward Protheroe (l)	307
1837	Edward Protheroe (l)	496
	Charles Wood (l)	487
	Hon. James Stuart Wortley (c)	308

1841	Edward Protheroe (l)	409
	Charles Wood (l)	383
	Sir George Sinclair (l)	320

Huddersfield

1832	Captain Lewis Fenton (l)	263
	Captain Joseph Wood (l)	152
	Death of Fenton, writ February 8th	
1834	John Blackburne (l)	234
	Michael Thomas Sadler (c)	147
1835	John Blackburne (l)	241
	General W A Johnson (l)	109
	On death of Blackburne, new writ April 28th	
1837	Edward Ellice jr (l)	340
	Richard Oastler (c)	290
1837	Wm R C Stansfield (l)	323
	Richard Oastler (c)	301
1841	Wm R C Stansfield (l)	

Knaresborough

1832	John Richards (l)	187
	Benjamin Rotch (l)	116
	Henry Rich (l)	96
	Andrew Lawson (c)	76
1835	Andrew Lawson (c)	179

	John Richards (l)	134
	Henry Rich (l)	111
	Sir Gregory Lewin (c)	20
1837	Henry Rich (l)	172
	Hon Charles Langdale (l)	124
	Andrew Lawson (c)	118
1841	Andrew Lawson (c)	150
	Wm Busfeild Ferrand (c)	122
	Charles Sturgeon (l)	85

Leeds

1832	John Marshall jr (l)	2012
	Thomas Babington Macaulay (l)	1984
	Michael Thomas Sadler (c)	1596

On Macaulay being appointed a member of the Council in India, new writ February 4th

1834	Edward Baines (l)	1951
	Rt Hon. Sir John Beckett (c)	1917
	Joshua Bower (l)	24
1835	Rt Hon. Sir John Beckett (c)	1941
	Edward Baines (l)	1803
	Wm Brougham (l)	1665
	Col J P Tempest (c)	4
1837	Edward Baines (l)	2028
	Sir Wm Molesworth Bt. (l)	1880
	Rt Hon. Sir John Beckett (c)	1759

1841	Wm Beckett (c)	2076
	Wm Aldam jr (l)	2043
	Joseph Hume (l)	2033
	Viscount Jocelyn (c)	1926

Pontefract

1832	Hon. Henry Valentine Stafford Jerningham (l)	
	John Gully (l)	
1835	John Gully (l)	509
	Viscount Pollington (c)	498
	Alexander Raphael (l)	478
1837	Richard Monckton Milnes (l-c)	507
	Wm Thomas Massey Stanley (l)	403
	Sir Culling Eardley Smith Bt. (l)	123
	Henry Gompertz (c)	0
1841	Viscount Pollington (c)	464
	Richard Monckton Milnes (l-c)	433
	John Gully (l)	253

Ripon

1832	Thomas Kitchenham Staveley (l)	168
	Joshua Samuel Crompton (l)	168
	Sir James Charles Dalbiac (c)	162
	Wm Markham (c)	159
1835	Sir James Charles Dalbiac (c)	246
	Thomas Pemberton (c)	235
	Thomas Kitchenham Staveley (l)	125

1837 Thomas Pemberton (c)
Sir Edward Burtenshaw Sugden Kt (c)

1841 Thomas Pemberton (c)
Sir Edward B Sugden (c)

On Sir Edward Sugden being appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland, new writ March 13th

1841 Sir George Cockburn GCB (c)

Sheffield

1832	John Parker (l)	1515
	James Silk Buckingham (l)	1498
	Thomas Asline Ward (l)	1210
	Samuel Bailey (l)	813
1835	John Parker (l)	1607
	James Silk Buckingham (l)	1554
	Samuel Bailey (l)	1434

On John Parker being appointed a Lord of the Treasury, new writ August 11th

1836	John Parker (l)	414
	John Bell (l)	0
1837	John Parker (l)	2186
	Henry George Ward (l)	1976
	John Thorneley (c)	655
1841	John Parker (l)	1849
	Henry George Ward (l)	1805
	David Urquhart (c)	503

	Wm Sheppard (c)	457

Wakefield

1832	Daniel Gaskell (l)	
1835	Daniel Gaskell (l)	277
	Hon. Wm Sebright Lascelles (c)	220
1837	Hon. Wm Sebright Lascelles (c)	307
	Daniel Gaskell (l)	281
1841	Joseph Holdsworth (l)	328
	Hon. Wm Sebright Lascelles (c)	300

(Lascelles elected on petition)

C = Conservative
L = Liberal/Whig-Liberal
L-C = Liberal-Conservative

Sources: Bean, *The Parliamentary Representation*; Dod, *Electoral Facts From 1832–1852.*

Appendix II

The Management of the Database of West Riding Voters

The database of West Riding voters compiled for this research into voting behaviour comprised over forty thousand records.[1] *All* voters in the extant poll books, or where these were not available, canvassing books and electoral registers, for the West Riding were included. No sampling was undertaken, although earlier studies had reported favourable results.[2] There were three reasons for this. Firstly, the process of data-entry gave a unique insight into the sources — and therefore the voters — which would not have been gained by merely drawing a sample.[3] Secondly, there were occasions — measuring participation and persistence rates, for example — when analysis of the whole poll book was desirable. Thirdly, I doubted the practicality and the accuracy of sampling of these 'inherently unstable sources of evidence'.[4]

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[1] Thus this *regional* study investigates nearly double the numbers of voters examined in the *national* surveys undertaken by O'Gorman (22,000) in *Voters, Patrons and Parties* and Phillips (26,000) in *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs.*

[2] Following the results of his investigations into letter-cluster sampling, Phillips took a 25 per cent sample from the poll books used as the basis of his book, *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*, p. 39. For a discussion of his methodology see J A Phillips, 'Achieving a Critical Mass Whilst Avoiding an Explosion: Letter-cluster Sampling and Nominal Record Linkage', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 9 (1979), pp. 493–509.

[3] Initially data-entry was undertaken on the time consuming basis of typing in each record. However, improvements in database management systems (using look-up tables and repeating similar entries automatically); in scanners and in optical character recognition (OCR) software during the period of research ensured the process could be speeded up and that accuracy was increased. For data-entry techniques see G Welling, 'A Strategy for Intelligent Input Programs for Structured Data', *History and Computing*, 5 (1993), pp. 35–41. For OCR software see *History and Computing*, Special Issue on Optical Character Reading, 5 (1993), pp. .

[4] P Adman, S W Baskerville and K Beedham, 'Computer-*Assisted* Record Linkage: or How Best to Optimise Links Without Generating Errors', *History and Computing* 4 (1992), pp. 2–15. For my critique of Phillips' methodology see S Richardson, 'Letter-Cluster Sampling and Nominal Record Linkage', *History and Computing* 6 (1994), pp. 168–177.

There were two main methodological problems to face in the analysis of this information. The database software could comfortably sort, select and count, even this quantity of information. The first problem concerned the difficult subject of nominal record linkage — of connecting successive poll books together or of comparing poll books with other related sources, such as rate books or census registers.[5] The technique adopted was a semi-automated, multiple pass system. As an illustration, the steps involved in linking the poll books of 1835 and 1837 for the borough of Halifax were as follows:

Table A2.1 Nominal record linkage in practice.

Steps	*Number of records linked*	*Fields used for linkage*
First pass	199	Surname, first name, address, occupation
Second pass	81	Surname, first name, occupation
Third pass	100	Surname, first name, address
Fourth pass	60	Surname, first name (standardised)
Fifth pass	26	Surnames only (standardised)
Sixth pass	4	Manual check
Total	*450*	

[5] The 1990s has seen a thorough examination of the advantages and drawbacks of the automation of record linkage. Two opposing methods concerning psephological data are Adman, Baskerville and Beedham 'Computer-*Assisted* Record Linkage' and C Harvey and E Green, 'Record Linkage Algorithms: Efficiency, Selection and Relative Confidence', *History and Computing*, 6 (1994), pp 143–152. G Morton, 'Presenting the Self: Record Linkage and Referring to Ordinary Historical Persons', *History and Computing*, 6 (1994), pp. 12–20, adds a further dimension to the problem.

At each stage the two poll books were compared automatically by the software, using the specified fields. The resulting matches were then checked manually for accuracy and saved in a separate file. The subsequent passes through the two poll books were carried out on those records which remained unmatched. Successfully connected records were added to the file containing the true links. Finally, a manual check of the remaining records in the two poll books was carried out in order to obtain match particularly difficult records. In the example above three-quarters of the records that could be potentially linked (the number in the 1835 poll book) were successfully matched.

The second methodological problem faced concerned the classification and categorisation of occupational information.[6] It was necessary both to produce results comparable with others in the field (see Table 2 below) *and* to provide as complete a picture as possible regarding the income, status and occupation of the West Riding electorate. The slight, but significant differences between the various approaches to the problem of categorisation — Nossiter's use of a drink category is logical but few other analysts have followed his example — meant that one single method, even if desired, could not be used. Thus, a multi-dimensional approach was adopted using the rationale of Morris's analysis of property titles using the Leeds Poll Books of 1832 and 1834.[7] Each occupation was classified by several methods: for example, separating out the 'industrial' from the 'non-industrial' and giving a rudimentary 'social' as opposed to 'economic' ranking. In some instances, individual occupational titles were analysed where *any* categorisation would destroy the nuances of voters' work experiences.

[6] This subject has been exhaustively investigated by W A Armstrong, 'The Use of Information about Occupation' in E A Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 191–310.

[7] Morris, 'Property Titles and the Use of British Urban Poll Books', see Table 2 for details.

Table A2.2 A Comparison of methods of occupational categorisation[8]

Morris (Organisation)	*Morris (Production)*
Agriculture	Food
Quarry	Milk
Distribution and processing	Drink
Transport	Stone
Commerce	Coal
Manufacturing	Metals
Craft	Textiles
Professional	Ropes
Services	Chemicals
Domestic	Glass
Non-specific	Pottery
	Leather
	Timber
	Paper

Nossiter	*O'Gorman*
Gentlemen and Professionals	Gentlemen and Professionals
Manufacturers and Merchants	Merchants and Manufacturers
Retail trade	Retailers
Craft trade	Skilled Craftsmen
Farming	Semi/Unskilled Labourers
Drink	Agriculturalists
Other	

Phillips (1)	*Phillips (2)*
Gentlemen and Professionals	Professionals/Gentlemen
Merchants and Entrepreneurs	Merchant/Elite
Retailers	Retail
Craftsmen/Artisans	Skilled Workers
Skilled Workmen	Unskilled Workers
Labourers	Other
Agriculturalists	

[8] Sources: Morris, 'Property Titles and the Use of British Urban Poll Books'; Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*; Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England* and *The Great Reform Bill and the Boroughs*; Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-Industrial Society.*

Koditschek

Genteel Occupational Sector
Urban-service Sector
Worsted and Related Sector

Following a multi-dimensional approach ensured that comparisons could be made with those analysing similar cohorts of voting populations and also that particular lines of inquiry suggested by the specific characters of the voters contained in the West Riding poll books could be followed up, without having to be constrained in a 'categoriser's strait-jacket'. After all, automation should offer greater flexibility and the ability to perform numerous, nuanced variations on a single theme at little extra cost in time or resources to the researcher. At the same time the integrity and particular, individual character of each source should be retained and thus aggregated results can be compared with individual examples.

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