Politics, Culture, Urban Elites and Townscapes in Georgian England: A Case Study of Derby c.1720-1800

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Abstract

This study examines the political, cultural and social changes experienced by Derby in the eighteenth century and the effect these changes had on the built environment. Eighteenth-century Derby has been little analysed in national studies of urban history, partly due to a perceived lack of source material, especially the loss of the town's corporation minute books which were destroyed by fire in 1841. This study corrects that oversight by examining the relationship between Derby's urban renaissance and social and political culture in a national context. Utilising historical sources such as parish records, newspapers, and the minute books of improvement commissions, it builds a picture of eighteenth-century town government and social elites in political, cultural, and social contexts. This study argues that the Derbyshire rural nobility reduced their interest in the affairs of the county town during the second half of the eighteenth century concurrently as there was an increase in the political and financial power of a new elite made up of professionals, manufacturers, and urban gentry. Derby therefore did not experience a complete urban renaissance, characterised primarily by gentry cultural pursuits patronised chiefly by a visiting rural nobility but instead developed more associational middling sort cultural occupations created and supported by this new urban elite. Cultural activities such as assemblies, theatres and horse racing struggled whilst the middling sort cultures of clubs and societies thrived. This middling sort associational culture led primarily by 'enlightenment men' encouraged urban improvement often against considerable and numerous opposition, enlarging the town beyond its medieval footprint through enclosure of common land and paving and lighting. Politically, Derby has often been regarded as a Whig oligarchy controlled by the Dukes of Devonshire but this study shows that there were limits to this political influence. The elections of 1748 and 1775 in particular show how Derby burgesses had a large say in picking their MPs and as they mostly voted Tory, the Duke and his agents had to resort to heavy handed means to gain victory. These elections also demonstrate that the town's politics were not always divided between Whigs and Tories but often between those willing to follow the will of the Cavendish family and their agents and

those who did not. Pre-eminently, this study demonstrates that power in Derby's eighteenth-century urban life was held by small groups of governors whether in the form of the corporation, the vestry, or improvement commissioners. This urban elite represented the economic elite of the borough and were primarily responsible for major changes in the town's physical, cultural, and social character in the period. However, these changes were, at times, strongly contested and there was much friction between social and political groups meaning that the impact of the urban renaissance was limited.

Dedicated to my son, Alvie Winfield, Born 27th August 2022

In memory of my history-loving Grandmother, Barbara Wilcox (1933-2018) who I hope is currently sat on a cloud watching her favourite historical events, as was her wish.

Acknowledgments

I am particularly grateful for my supervisors, Paul Elliott and Ruth Larsen who have been incredibly patient during the writing of this thesis and have been a constant source of help and encouragement. I am also thankful to other history department colleagues at the University of Derby, Cath Feely and Paul Whickman, for their support throughout the process.

This thesis was borne out of my time working for Derby Museums Trust whose primary focus is the eighteenth century, housing the largest collection of the works of the painter, Joseph Wright (1734-1797), as well as caring for Lombe's Silk Mill (1721) and the town house of architect, Joseph Pickford (1770). I am especially thankful for the support of past colleagues at the museum, including Janine Derbyshire and Kim Launert who were integral in helping me maintain a work-life-study balance during my time there and Lucy Bamford and Matt Edwards who have assisted me in sourcing information and images right up until the deadline.

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Finally, I would like to thank friends and family for being so supportive during the writing of this thesis with particular mention to my current colleagues at IGEM, most notably Ian McCluskey and Sayda Lees-Manning, best friend Shaun, in-laws, Bridget and Ian, Tony, Andrew, Katherine, my mum, Janet and my beloved cat, Tiggy, who passed away in 2019 after 18 years of keeping me sane. Most important of all I would like to thank my wife, Rosie, who has taken this journey with me, sharing in the joys and frustrations and for being so incredibly patient throughout our time together, and my 1-year-old son, Alvie, who has provided the positive energy that got me over the finish line.

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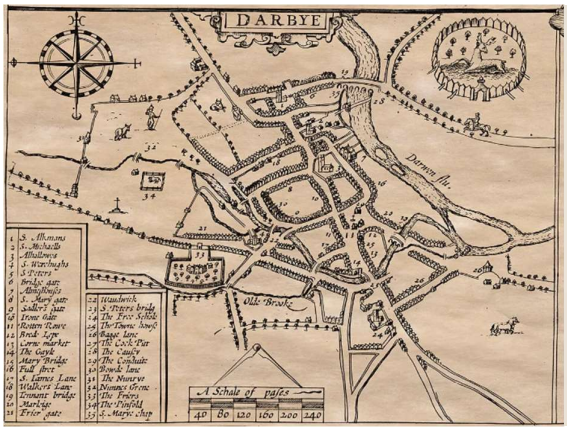
Declaration: The research and writing in this thesis are the candidate's own work.

Introduction



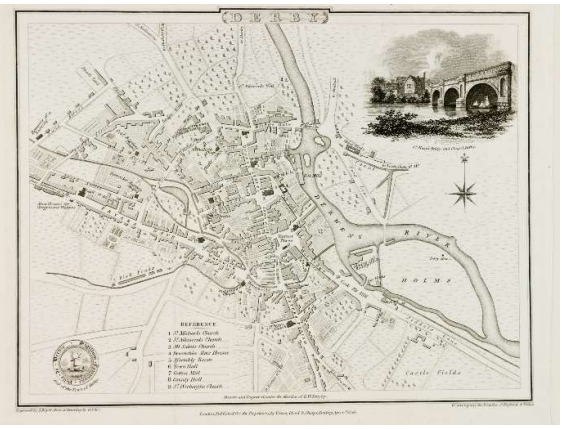


Figure 1: John Speed, *Map of Derby*, 1610

Figure 2: E. W. Bruyley, *Map of Derby*, 1806

In the course of the eighteenth century, Derby grew out of its medieval footprint, both in size and style, with newly paved and lighted principal streets and new cultural buildings such as an assembly rooms and a theatre. The town was connected to the national waterway network which strengthened links between urban markets and the rural hinterland and developed an industrial identity through the emergence of a silk industry; this all reinforced its role as a trading hub. These changes, though, were not due to the passive accumulation of 'improvements' but were instead the result of social and cultural shifts within the 'urban elite' whilst the rural nobility retreated from the town and were replaced in urban governance by an increasingly affluent middling sorts. Attempts to create a gentrified cultural identity in Derby, such as those found at leisure towns like Buxton and Bath, were limited in their success, although associational and scientific culture thrived. What remained constant throughout the period was the fact that influence in Derby's urban affairs was concentrated in a small group of people in the corporation, the parish vestries and the improvement commissions. This coterie which comprised members of the banking, law, and manufacturing professions, shaped urban life and government in eighteenth-century Derby.

Compared to many other Georgian towns, including nearby Nottingham and Leicester, there have been few academic studies of Georgian Derby. Some topics have attracted wider attention such as the development of Lombe's Silk Mill, the involvement of the

town in the second Jacobite Rebellion in 1745 (which had fairly little impact on day-to-day life), the works of the artist Joseph Wright (1734-1797), the architectural history of Derby and the Derby Philosophical Society (1783), but most other aspects have been little studied.[1] With a few exceptions such as Craven's *Illustrated History of Derby*, Elliott's *Derby Philosophers*, sections on the town in county or regional histories like Beckett's *East Midlands*, there are no recent scholarly studies of Derby's Georgian society.[2] Material on eighteenth-century Derby has been published at times in the *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (1879-) and *Derbyshire Miscellany* (1956-). There have also been recent PhD theses such as those by Collinge on the Derbyshire women in business and by Riordan on Derbyshire politics but these are not primarily focussed upon Derby in this period.[3] The gaps in studies of eighteenth-century Derby can be partly explained by the destruction of corporation papers for this period in a disastrous fire in 1841 which included the minutes of Town Hall meetings. However, this thesis has been able to partially circumvent this problem by examining other sources to present a fuller picture of corporation activities and urban governance such as parish records, poll books, and commission minute books, which have not hitherto been subject to significant scrutiny.

The study of provincial towns and the urban experience in the long eighteenth century has been an exciting field in recent decades, with efforts being made to explain why so many (but by no means all) towns enjoyed commercial growth, prosperity and cultural vitality in the period. Borsay's *English Urban Renaissance* study still serves as a useful framework for analyses of eighteenth-century towns. Borsay argues that towns experienced a cultural revival between 1660-1770 which determined their identity and function. This cultural renaissance was born from the interaction between the increased urban influence of rural nobility and the urban gentry and rising middling sorts, with

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[1] Malcolm I. Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835* (Oxford: 1969); Duncan Gray, *Nottingham Through 500 Years: A History of Town Government* (Nottingham: 1960); A. Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, (Leicester, 1954); R. W. Greaves, *The Corporation of Leicester 1689-1836* (London, 1939); Harry Butterton, *The Old Derby Silk Mill and its Rivals* (Derby, 1996); L. Eardley-Simpson, *Derby and the Forty-Five* (London, 1933); Benedict Nicholson, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light* (London, 1968); Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers* (Manchester, 2009).

[2] Maxwell Craven, *An Illustrated History of Derby* (Derby: 2007); Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: Science and Culture in British Urban Society 1700-1850* (Manchester: 2009); John V. Beckett, *The East Midlands from AD 100* (London: 1988).

[3] Peter Collinge, *Female Enterprise in Georgian Derbyshire, c. 1780-c. 1830,* Unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Warwick: 2015); James Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics': Episodes from Derbyshire, c. 1660-1760,* Unpublished PhD Thesis (Durham University: 2018).

towns catering for this 'thirst for human contact' which served their natural roles as a 'point of exchange and meeting place for society.'[4] Criticisms of the scope and timeline of the urban renaissance model have come from various other urban historians. This has included additional work from Borsay himself and Hinks and Armstrong, who all sought to revisit or further the urban renaissance concept by, for example, using the lens of architecture, newspapers, and sport.[5] McInnes made some criticisms of Borsay's arguments based upon his work on Shrewsbury, claiming that the impact of the urban renaissance was limited and that it did not impact many small towns in particular and was largely confined to small urban elites.[6] Sweet claimed the debate should be broader and not involve itself to much with the finer details.[7] Barry, writing about the Anglican Crisis in Bristol in the period covered by Borsay, claimed that the concept undervalued religion assuming that groups and societies were secular and that religious life was perceived as something more likely to prevent urban growth than aid it.[8] Ellis, in *The Georgian Town*, stated that many centres in the North and Midlands started their urban renaissance in the 1770s, just when Borsay ended his study.[9] Green, focussing on the big houses of provincial towns as a marker of the urban renaissance, pushed the starting point back as far as the Restoration and the claiming of defunct monastic land and puts the end as the American crisis of the 1760s and 70s and the 'rise of sensibility'.[10] Although Beckett and Smith place Nottingham's urban renaissance during the first half of the eighteenth century, they claimed it was consumer-led with the improvement of the wealthier streets being caused by a prosperous middling sort refronting their properties to match the affluent interiors, rather than it being led by commissions or the corporation.[11] Barker has argued for a 'second urban renaissance' that took hold in northern cities in the late Georgian period which was led by middling, consumer culture

[4] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford: 1991), p. 267.
[5] John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong (eds.), *The English Urban Renaissance Revisited* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: 2018).
[6] Angus McInnes, 'The Emergence of a Leisure Town: Shrewsbury 1660-1760', in *Past & Present* (120:1, 1988), p. 84.
[7] Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society, and Culture* (New York: 1999), p. 230.
[8] Jonathan Barry, 'Cultural Patronage and the Anglican Crisis: Bristol c.1689-1775', in Bob Harris (ed.), *Politics and the Nation* (Oxford: 2002), p. 191.
[9] Ellis, *Georgian Town*, p. 81.
[10] Adrian Green, 'The Big House in the English Provincial Town' in Hinks and Armstrong (eds.), *Urban Renaissance Revisited*, p. 142
[11] John V. Beckett and Catherine Smith, 'Urban Renaissance and Consumer Revolution in Nottingham, 1688-1750, in *Urban History*, 27:1 (May 2000), pp. 31-33 and 48.

rather than being 'elite-led and leisure-orientated' as it was for Borsay's renaissance in the South.[12] This thesis argues that, as Ellis and Barker have contended, Derby's Georgian urban renaissance largely occurred from the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, Derby was not a leisure town and religion still played an important part in its urban culture and politics.

The urban renaissance occurred because of the increased interest of the rural nobility in urban affairs and the rising spending power of the middling sorts. However, as this thesis demonstrates, the urban flowering was also stimulated by developments in political culture and structures. In Derby, by the end of the eighteenth century, three different types of administrative bodies were present, all with varying responsibility for the town's politics and improvement. Derby's main political body was the corporation, founded on ancient custom and confirmed in various royal charters with the last before this period being granted in 1682.[13] Keith-Lucas, in *The Unreformed Local Government System,* attempted to provide a general model for a corporation whilst seeking to place corporations back into the national political framework. He claimed that nepotism was as present at the bottom of the political system as it was at the top, and highlighted that these 'self-elected bodies generally kept their membership within the narrow limits of church-going, well-to-do, professional men and major tradesmen'.[14] Clark, who focussed on the civic leaders of Gloucester, proposed that the town's purpose and scope dictated corporate membership.[15] O'Gorman, Innes and Rogers have also made strides to save the pre-reform electorates from accusations of control, lack of free will, and political dumbness by showing the agency that the electorate possessed during elections evidenced by the lengths that candidates went through to garner their support.[16]

Religion and politics in eighteenth-century towns went hand in hand as parish vestries shared urban governance with corporations. Historians who have dealt with urban government, such as Keith-Lucas and Clark, have emphasised how the vestries were

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[12] Hannah Barker, '"Smoke Cities": Northern Industrial Towns in Late Georgian England' in *Urban History* (31:2, 2004) pp176-7.
[13] F. Williamson, 'Derby's Last Charter', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (54, 1933).
[14] Bryan Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System* (London: 1980), pp. 13 and 19.
[15] Peter Clark, 'The Civic Leaders of Gloucester 1580-1800', Peter Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (London: 1985), pp. 314-5.
[16] Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties: The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734*-1832 (Oxford: 1989), pp2-5; Joanna Innes and Nicholas Rogers, 'Politics and Government 1700-1840', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Vol 2 1540-1840* (Cambridge: 2000).

equally important to urban politics as the corporation though with varying conclusions. Clark described parish administration as 'increasingly crucial for urban order, providing generous poor relief and regulating through settlement controls lower class immigration' to towns.[17] Keith-Lucas has discussed how the 'inadequacy of the parish vestry' was as much likely to lead to 'a demand for bodies equipped to provide the services that were needed' as the incompetent and corrupt corporations.[18] For Keith-Lucas, vestries were as important as corporations and therefore as culpable for the failure of urban governance. Clark places the Church as central to English society in the eighteenth century, both 'as an established corporation, drawing its revenues and playing a role defined by constitutional law, but also as an agency of religion.'[19] Hempton has shown how the church was essential to the life of the community through an uncontested monopoly over the rites of passage, its provision of welfare and education, its widespread distribution of popular forms of religious literature and its thorough identification with the political, legal, and social institutions of the State both at the centre and in the localities.' For Hempton, the Church of England was 'an integral and indispensable part of the theory and practice of governing.'[20]

Dissenters were barred from taking public office unless they practised occasional conformity, which was taking the sacrament once a year.[21] Occasional conformity has been found in Derby by Orchard who has identified dissenters within Derby's corporation in this period and by Thomis who has found a similar situation in Nottingham.[22] Holding positions in corporations though was not the only way for Dissenters to possess urban influence. Watts shows how dissenting traders and craftsman were successful in business not because they had been conditioned by their religion to make profits, but because they applied their minds and hands to tasks which they and their separatist forebears had always pursued.[23]

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[17] Clark, 'Civic Leaders', p. 325.
[18] Keith-Lucas, *Unreformed Local Government*, p. 108.
[19] Jonathan Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge: 1986) p. 277.
[20] David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: 1996), pp. 3 and 15.
[21] Brent S. Sirota, 'The Occasional Conformity Controversy, Moderation, and the Anglican Critique of Modernity, 1700-1714', in *The Historical Journal* (57:1, 2014), p. 81.
[22] Stephen Orchard, *Nonconformity in Derbyshire: A Study in Dissent, 1600-1800* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009); Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham*, p. 10.
[23] Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: 2002), pp. 362 and 369-70.

It is important to define the social groups which will appear in this thesis. In 1753, James Nelson determined the five 'classes' as being 'Nobility, Gentry, the genteel Trades (all of those which require large Capital), the common Trades, and the Peasantry'.[24] This thesis will use this contemporary viewpoint as a guide. Goodrich has shown how the term 'aristocracy' was a political term, referring only to those in government and therefore not a social term. 'Nobility' had a much wider coverage, but this was still legally defined by contemporaries as those direct members of the peerage whereas in practice it referred to anyone within a peerage family.[25] This study will use nobility to refer to members of the peerage as there was no urban nobility in Derby until the very end of the period covered by this analysis and thus it is easier to distinguish between the rural nobility and urban gentry. The rural landed classes included yeoman farmers who, although important in their own parishes, did not have the same influence in urban centres as the nobility. The term 'aristocracy' will only be used when it is necessary to identify them as separate to the nobility. The professions were a recognisable social group who sought to justify and defend their status and are examined in chapter 3. With the middling sort and the urban gentry, the professions constituted Derby's urban elite. The urban gentry were a relatively small group who identified themselves as gentlemen and nothing else on poll books and subscription lists. Half of them were women. The middling sorts, for the purpose of this thesis, will include both the 'genteel trades' and 'common trades' discussed by Nelson as relative success was the only differentiating mark between these two groups.

The influence of the rural nobility on urban centres demands more investigation as to how important it was physically, financially and culturally in this period. Studies that do include discussions on towns often discuss whether the rural nobility were replaced, actively or passively, by the urban gentry and rising middling sorts.[26] Cannon concludes that as professionals and urban gentry depended so much on aristocratic patronage, they could not discern themselves as 'a separate or rival interest however much they

[24] Penelope J. Corfield, 'Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *History* (72:234, February 2005), p. 38.
[25] Amanda Goodrich, 'Understanding a Language of 'Aristocracy', 1700-1850, in *The Historical Journal* (56:2, 2013), pp. 372-374.
[26] Jon Stobart, 'County, Town and Country: Three Histories of Urban Development in Eighteenth-Century Chester', in Peter Borsay and Lindsay Proudfoot (eds.), *Provincial Towns in Early Modern England and Ireland* (New York: 2002); John Rule, *Albion's People: English Society 1714-1815* (New York: 1994), p. 99; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 307.

may have been enraged by patrician nonchalance in paying bills.'[27] Hunt too concludes that there is no evidence of the middling sorts seeking wholesale to enter the Gentry.[28]

The urban gentry and the professionals, the groups most likely to be viewed as challenging the hegemony of the rural nobility in urban centres, have also been largely neglected bar a few recent studies. Harris discussed how the 'tendency of gentlemen to be absent from the communities in which they were supposed to reside might have opened up a social and political space for those below them to exercise authority', a space that was often taken by the more prosperous middling sorts.[29] These middling sorts, according to Earle, were characterised by 'accumulation, self-improvement and the employment of labour and capital.'[30] The more prosperous members of this group were the professionals who, according to Corfield, 'were credited with mysterious powers not upon the basis of special political, military or economic resources but by virtue of their command of professional knowledge.' Bankers, Lawyers, Clergymen and Doctors rose to the top of urban society, filling the gaps in government left by the retreating rural nobility but 'all forceful individuals with mastery of a coveted expertise could wield a certain authority on their own terrain.'[31]

Although many of Derby's corporation documents were destroyed in 1841, other sources will be used to demonstrate how it operated through examining the documents of the other administrative bodies in the town plus newspaper accounts of the corporation's decisions. Collectively, surviving minute books from the five Derby parishes cover the entire period, although each of the parishes has a different level of coverage with only St Alkmund's and All Saints', the principal Derby churches, providing a complete run for the period. The minute books for the improvement commission set up by the 1792 Paving and Lighting Act and the 1793 Canal project also survive allowing for an in depth look at urban government outside of the corporation.

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[27] Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Enlightenment, c.1690-1800', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Women's History: Britain 1700-1850* (Abingdon: 2005), p. 10.
[28] Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort* (California: 1996), pp. 1-4.
[29] Tim Harris, 'Introduction', in Tim Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke: 2001), p. 12.
[30] Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London: 1989), p. 17.
[31] Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London: 2000), pp. 2 and 19.

The lack of corporation records also means that the names, trades, and political views of Derby residents had to be found elsewhere. As trade directories did not exist for Derby until the 1790s, this thesis has relied on poll books to cross-check names and trades though these only provided names of those eligible to vote and only for the years in which polls were taken.[32] This thesis has also leant heavily on the *Derby Mercury* newspaper for which a complete run exists from its foundation in 1732. The *Mercury* recorded the deaths of notable citizens, events, celebrations, sales of property and businesses, trade advertisements and more, providing us with a gazette of eighteenth-century life in the town.

The first chapter will examine the relationship between the rural nobility and the townspeople and show how although the urban gentry and more prosperous middling sort aspired to improve their social position, they did not seek actively to supplant the rural nobility in Derby and that there was a great deal of co-operation between the groups. There was a great deal of celebration whenever a member of the rural nobility visited the borough even if they were frequent visitors or resided locally. Less regular, yet equally important, visitors were treated to a tour of the town, in particular those locations which the urban elite were most interested in showcasing such as the China Works and Lombe's Silk Mill, symbols of the borough's prosperity. As the century progressed these visits became rarer, but this was not commensurate with a rise in the rural nobility laying down roots in the town. This shows a decrease in the physical presence of the nobility in Derby, a common theme of this thesis.

Into their place stepped the more affluent members of the middling sorts and the professionals. Although they never sought to replace the nobility, they were quick to fill the void left by their retreat from urban centres. The letters of Jedidiah Strutt (1726-1797) to his son William (1756-1830) give an example of a manufacturing family acknowledging the importance of gentility to success in eighteenth-century urban life, twinning economic achievement with social advancement. Jedidiah understood the limits to which someone of his social standing could aspire, but that success could be achieved through the amicable interaction with their social betters. There were few opportunities for this to happen but one of the most common was the joint resolutions made by the rural nobility and urban elites on national and regional financial and

[32] Poll books for Derby borough elections exist for 1710, 1741, 1748, and 1775 (DLSL BA324).

economic issues. Petitions, such as those supporting the monarchy or protecting Derby and Derbyshire from government policies, and charitable donations in times of economic hardship gave urban elites the chance to stand with the rural nobility as representatives of the borough.

Chapter two counters the generally held assumption that Derby was a complete Whig oligarchy and will show instead that the political situation in the borough was often fluid and required the constant attention of those involved both in corporation politics and electoral politics. Derby's corporation was structured to be restricted with each branch of the inner circle filling vacancies amongst them from the rank below and only those who had served as a chamberlain or a steward, roles hand-picked by the inner circle, were allowed to enter. The members of the upper bench were predominantly Anglican Whigs but not exclusively. The two families which held the most mayoral terms in this period were the Hopes, who were Tory, and the Cromptons, who were dissenters.

Derby's electoral politics were much more difficult for the Whig elite to hold down than has previously been assumed with borough elections needing the constant attention of the Cavendish family and their agents. Voters were quick to point out if a candidate was only paying attention to the town at election time and not in between and candidates of both sides had to put aside vast amounts of money to wine and dine the people of the town if they were going to be successful. Where the Whig elite were able to flex their power was in their attempts to rig elections through closing the elections early before many of the rural, mostly Tory-voting burgesses were able to vote but mostly in the creation of honorary burgess. The poll books show mass numbers of Whig voters, voting on the final day, who all resided in villages close to the Duke of Devonshire's estate at Chatsworth. The respective Dukes were kept up to date with electoral proceedings, as shown in the 1775 election, and were able to exert control from a distance. It was the interest of the Duke that caused a division in the Whig cause in the 1748 election again showing that political power was far from guaranteed but also that oligarchy cannot be judged on party politics alone.

The third chapter analyses how legal and financial institutions formed more of a direct link between upper and lower classes in Derby than politics did, binding law maker with law breaker and the wealthy with the poor. The most represented professionals in

Derby were the lawyers who became ever more important in urban life, as they did everywhere, with the increase in legal documents needed for urban government and improvement commissions. They became the core of the urban elite evidenced by the 1775 election which was contested by two lawyers in John Gisborne (c. 1717-1779) and Daniel Parker Coke (1717-1776).

Bankers are often excluded from lists of eighteenth-century professionals, such as Corfield's and Holmes', but in Derby they were an essential part of the urban elite.[33] They had the esoteric knowledge that marked the other professions and were fundamental to the smooth running of urban life. The collapse of the Heath bank in the 1770s caused a ripple effect that brought many other businesses to bankruptcy showing how tenuous and limited urban credit systems were. Both lawyers and bankers also served on vestries and were required by law to provide financial relief to the poor locking both the elite and the poor into the same relief system. The parish officials used this system to control the poor through handpicking recipients who met their standards or, as was the case with workhouses and almshouses, identifying the poor through the use of uniforms and badges. Legal and financial responsibilities were therefore a way for members of the urban elite to control and reform the urban lower classes.

Chapter three will also look at the history of rioting in eighteenth-century Derby as many of the professionals and urban gentry who served on the corporation will also have served as Justices of the Peace. They were required to act in times of civil strife caused by dearth of provision or due to high prices but also were tasked with avoiding such disturbances by regulating the market. The riots of 1755 and 1766 are analysed to show how the justices responded to rioting both in the town and in the county and how the actions of individual justices could escalate tensions or placate the crowd. The lack of a riot in Derby between 1766 and the end of the century is indicative of the lessons learned by magistrates as they gained a tighter control on illegal market practices to avoid further strife. Their success is shown by the avoidance of riots in the town during periods of national rioting in the 1780s and 1790s.

Chapter four analyses the role that religion played in Derby's urban government and the physical infrastructure and shows how the Anglican vestry system was still an essential

[33] Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London, 2000); Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society*, 1680-1730 (London, 1982).

cornerstone of urban administration and how dissenting communities produced the most important members of Derby's urban elite. All Saints' Church was the biggest parish in the borough and was the most important as it was patronised by the corporation and the Dukes of Devonshire. It was a key location for political pageantry, particularly around the election of mayors, with corporation members processing between All Saints' and the Town Hall, linking the spiritual and the secular parts of urban life. That said this relationship was not always smooth as the boundaries between their administrative responsibilities overlapped, such as with the issues with the rebuilding of All Saints' in 1720.

The urban elite, corporation, and vestry were coterminous, sharing members and therefore never being truly separate bodies. Often, members of the corporation previously served on vestries, suggesting that it was a steppingstone into mainstream urban politics. This makes sense as parishes provided a greater deal of representation with more offices and less restrictive entry criteria. Even dissenters, especially the most prosperous ones, served on parish vestries suggesting that the need for members was more important than maintaining a hegemony. Facing civil restrictions, some dissenters focussed on business and the accumulation of wealth becoming the mainstays of Derby urban life. William Strutt for example, a Unitarian, had by the end of the century become a member of the corporation, a leading manufacturer, and the head of the 1792 improvement commission.

The fifth chapter shows that although trade and the market were controlled by a relatively few urban traders and manufacturers, they led to a noticeable change in the town's physical footprint. The focus of Derby's economy changed leading to new industries and new areas of development yet no one single trade became strong enough to take a leading role as happened in other urban centres. Derby's primary role at the beginning of the period was as a commercial hub, sitting centrally in the country and on a trade network that stretched from the mines of North Derbyshire to the port of Hull with the River Derwent being the main route for bulk trade coming in and going out of the borough. Several times during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, the traders of Derby attempted to improve the navigation of the Derwent to boost business, in the face of opposition from both within and without the borough. Opposition came from those in Derby not involved in bulk trade and from other towns

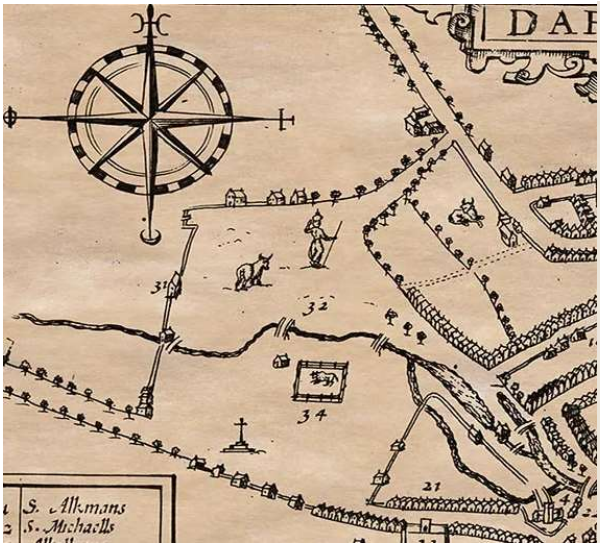
in the region fearing loss of their own trade. This is the same situation that the proponents of the Derby canal found a century later where a small group of urban elites, this time manufacturers and professionals, sought to benefit from a stronger link with national communication networks. In both instances the improvement of access to waterways helped to boost the trade and manufactures of Derby and its surrounding region.

A general theme in this thesis is the separation between the urban economic elite and the urban political elite and this is most evident when looking at the management of the market. In the early-eighteenth century, the Derby Company of Mercers were in charge of regulating the market and they restricted membership to only certain trades; trades which had a small role in the town's economy. Eventually these limitations caused the company to become obsolete with their membership and role becoming synonymous with that of the corporation by the 1740s. During the mid- to late-eighteenth century, the corporation used the *Derby Mercury* newspaper to condemn engrossers and forestallers. The Company of Mercers did not represent the main trades of the town, such as silk manufacturing, and thus this created a gap between those with the responsibility for controlling the town's economy and those forming the very core of that economy.

Chapter six uses Borsay's concept of the urban renaissance to show how Derby went through a limited cultural renaissance which occurred largely after the terminus suggested by Borsay in the 1760s. In 1760, Derby had one Assembly Rooms, no purpose-built theatre, few fully paved walks and a moribund spa that had undergone several unsuccessful ownerships. These cultural pursuits required a strong upper-class presence, such as at York, Tunbridge Wells, and Bath, but Derby's links with the rural nobility were becoming less and less physical as the period progressed. Derby's assemblies suffered due to restrictive entry requirements and the town's attempts to hold regular music festivals did not succeed either. Derby also suffered from its proximity to other cultural centres such as Buxton, Matlock, and Lichfield which were more established leisure centres by the mid-eighteenth century and Nottingham which had a greater noble presence. Instead, Derby formed strong middling sorts cultures centred upon clubs and societies with an active literary and scientific culture. The urban elite were also resilient to attempts by the upper classes and some clergy to curb or

outright ban customs popular with the labouring population like football and animal sports. As a centrally located town with a strong trading economy, Derby had many inns, taverns and alehouses which were central to urban life and culture throughout the period alongside a new theatre in Bold Lane (1773) and two assembly rooms (1730 and 1763). Derby's associational culture utilised the town's public houses with philosophical societies, political associations, music clubs and other gatherings using their spaces for meetings. The members of these associations formed the core of the urban elite and created linkages that formed bridges between the political and economic life of the town.

The final chapter looks at urban improvement in Derby demonstrating that it was not a unifying force that benefitted all the town. Instead, as other sections of the thesis have demonstrated, improvement was the passion of a very small number of urban elites and was focussed solely on those areas of the town inhabited by the rich and which would make the best marketing tool to draw in visitors to the borough. For much of the period improvement simply meant the removing of nuisances and the repairing of roadways. The responsibilities for road repairs caused issues, both physical and legal, as the corporation, the parish, and turnpike networks all had some responsibility for different parts of the same road running through the town. The inhabitants of the borough were also responsible for the road and pavement immediately in front of their property leading to different levels of repairs. Uneven road improvement, and the problems of lighting the town, led to a push towards improvement commissions that were coming into vogue nationally in the latter part of this period. The actions of Derby's Paving and Lighting Commission, formed in 1792, represent a particular example of how a small group of elites could have a major influence on a town's physical image.



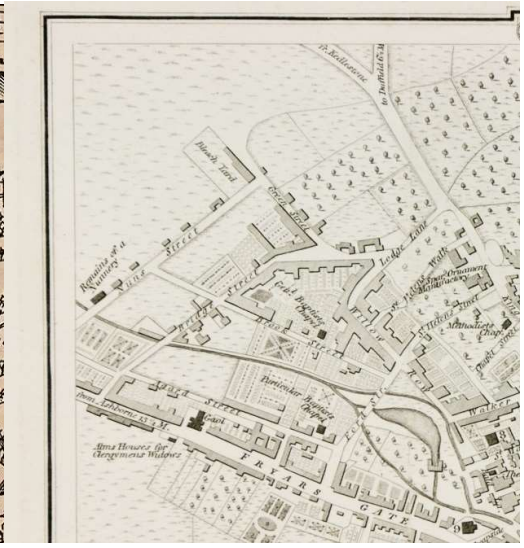


Figure 3: Close-up of Nuns Green taken from John Speed, *Map of Derby*, 1610

Figure 4: Close-up of Nuns Green taken from E. W. Bruley, *Map of Derby*, 1806

The most obvious change that Derby underwent in this period was the two-part enclosure of a large swathe of urban common land called Nuns Green in 1768 and 1792 and the subsequent building of a gentrified 'enlightened' street on one part and an industrial concentration on the other part. Figures 3 and 4 show these changes with the path running by the cross in figure 3 becoming a full street by 1806 in figure 4 as well as the building work on Nuns Green that had just begun by the time the map was drawn. While the 1768 enclosure has left no record of opposition, the 1792 enclosure sparked the greatest opposition of any improvement project in the town during the eighteenth century as a pamphlet war erupted between the two sides and over 1,000 people signed a petition against the selling of the land. Comparing these two enclosure processes shows that a small group was able to exact a great deal of change, yet they were held in check by the general populace who were not merely passive observers of such events, a continuation of the negotiations with the corporation and urban oligarchy at election time.

The rise in influence of the middling sorts and professionals as part of the urban elite, and the large cultural shift towards a limited urban renaissance are intrinsically linked. As the influence and attention of the rural nobility in urban affairs declined, the middling sorts and professionals were able to infiltrate the vacated physical and social space. The vestries, the corporation and the improvement commissions were all

dominated by this limited social group, often containing the same members across the board. This led to the town's economy, culture, and politics all becoming more associated with the emerging middling sorts whilst the more gentrified aspects receded. This new urban elite also changed the physical fabric of the town through their support of urban regeneration projects, improved commercial and communication links, and changes in the physical footprint of the town through industrial and economic growth.

Chapter 1: Derby's Urban Elite

In the aftermath of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, Members of Parliament began to garner greater political influence with the reduction of monarchical power and took more interest in boroughs that returned MPs. The rural nobility exerted their influence in boroughs politically through the corporation and borough elections, financially by funding cultural and improvement projects, and physically by attending social and sporting events. In Derby by the late-eighteenth century, the presence of the rural nobility had steadily declined as their wealth and power was matched by a new urban elite of wealthy manufacturers, professionals, and urban gentry and more prosperous members of the middling sorts such as merchants, traders and innkeepers. This chapter will argue that Derby's urban elite worked with the rural nobility, aped them in some respects and then organically supplanted them. The rural nobility living in the hinterland around Derby, and further afield, often cooperated with townsmen and worked with them on issues affecting the borough and the county as a whole and that although the influence of the rural nobility was eclipsed by that of the urban elite in the town towards the end of our period, it was down to economic reasons rather than social.

The influence of the rural nobility in boroughs has not been analysed by many historians although the eighteenth century is often considered to be an 'Aristocratic Century'.[1] Fayrer-Jones has analysed the roles of the Dukes of Bedford and Marquises of Bute in Usk and Cardiff, both serving as Lords of the Manor in these unincorporated towns, who used corruption as an extension of their manorial rights to maintain their influence whilst Chalus has highlighted the role that aristocratic men and women played in urban elections.[2] Contemporary polemicists, such as those of Allen and Cobden, both writing in the nineteenth century, created the idea that firstly the aristocracy and rural nobility were open social groups, ready to be infiltrated, and that the middling sorts and

[1] John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: 2003); John V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (Oxford: 1989); Jonathan Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge: 1986), p. 42.

[2] Elizabeth Fayrer-Jones, '"Make him an Offer He Can't Refuse": Corruption, Coercion, and Aristocratic Landowners in Nineteenth-century Urban Wales', in *International Journal of Regional and Local History* (14:2, 2019). Elaine Chalus, 'Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century' in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-century England* (Harlow: 1997).

urban gentry actively sought to replace them. Cobden accused the manufacturers and merchants of only desiring riches whilst Allen described the goal of the middle class as being 'to hang on the skirts of the aristocracy' if they could, or 'ape them in everything' if they could not.[3] More recent historical studies have sought to counter this. Beckett proposed that the idea of the Aristocracy being open is a 'well-rehearsed myth' whilst Stone and Fawtier Stone declared the idea of an 'open elite – open to large-scale infiltration by merchant wealth' was dead.[4]

The middling sorts, on the other hand, were a new social and political force whose rise has been closely linked to the growth and developments of towns.[5] They gained their prominence through their increased wealth in the improving economic conditions experienced by towns during the eighteenth century, a time of relative peace and prosperity in the post-restoration era, and from the opportunities that came because of the presence of industry and the professions. The majority of the urban elite in Derby stemmed from this group. Riordan, in his study of Derbyshire Toryism, has looked at the social make-up of Derby voters during elections in the first half of the eighteenth century, showing that in 1741, 16.5% of the 646 voters were categorised as gentry and professional; 4% were merchants and manufacturers; shopkeepers and small retailers formed 12% of the vote; 24.7% were craftsmen, with the largest group, the 'semi- and unskilled occupations', providing 39% of the total number of voters.[6] Even with this sparse data which only covers a select group (roughly 10% of the town's population could vote in this period) the manufacturing nature of Derby's urban economy is represented here at least amongst those eligible to vote. Although the financial might of the rural nobility was needed to bring about the urban renaissance, it depended on the middling sorts to use their new surplus wealth and interest in cultural pursuits for it to continue. They could also be members of the corporation, and therefore members of the electorate, although this did not secure them from economic hardships. This chapter will show how the social barriers between the rural nobility, the urban gentry and the middling sorts were permeable. Cooperation happened between these groups

[3] Beckett, *Aristocracy in England*, p. 4.
[4] Beckett, *Aristocracy in England*, p. 2; Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford: 1984), p. 403.
[5] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political & Social History 1688-1832*, 2nd edition (London: 2016), p. 76.
[6] James Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics': Episodes from Derbyshire c.1660-1760* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2018), p. 153.

particularly in acting on behalf of Derby and Derbyshire on a national level but although social gaps were crossed, religious and political gaps could remain.

Unlike the nobility, identifiable by their titles and estates, the middling sorts are harder to define. French has argued that the use of 'middle sort' has been 'easy to invoke' as it is 'such a malleable social category'.[7] They have been described as being the 'engine of commercial and industrial growth, leading the way in philanthropy and in observance of morality' as well as engines of commercial growth as they were most notable as 'masters and employers' who 'conserved and transmitted skills, stocks in trade, and wealth'. [8] It has also been noted that the 'employment of labour and capital' were distinguishing features as well as cultural markers such as accumulation and self-improvement.[9] D'Cruz has added social markers to definitions of the middling sorts identifying their position as 'community broker', stemming from increased household and political independence.[10] To identify the middling sorts economically, Earle asserts that those earning between £500-£5000 annually can be confidently placed in this group though only £50 per annum was needed to live a comfortable middling sorts life whilst some earnt up to £10,000.[11] Ellis used the lower figure of £50 to claim that around 20% of urban populations can be deemed middling sorts which pales in comparison to the 70-75% of the town's population earning less than £50 per year.[12] The middling sorts were the core of a town's trade as producers and consumers, the chief protectors of a town's wealth as employers and trades, but also its moral leaders. They led charity commissions, organised poor relief and formed philosophic and philanthropic societies. From this position of economic and moral strength, they were able, and often required, to play an important role in urban governance. By serving as burgesses and as overseers of the poor and constables for the parishes, they served as part of the vertical organisation of the town with the mayor and aldermen at the top. Their economic and intellectual input was necessary for the smooth running of the

[7] Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford: 2007), p. 262.
[8] Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society, And Culture* (New York: 1999), p. 190; Paul Slack, 'Great and Good Towns 1540-1700', in Paul Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Vol 2 1540-1840* (Cambridge: 2000), p. 363.
[9] Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London, 1989), p. 17.
[10] Jonathan Barry, 'Introduction', in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (Basingstoke: 1994), p. 4.
[11] Earle, *Making of the English Middle Class*, pp. 14-15.
[12] Joyce M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680-1840* (Basingstoke: 2001), p. 73.

borough. As members of guilds, vestries, and charitable trusts, they provided the horizontal organisation that 'sustained senses of identity and sociability.'[13]

The openness of Derby's corporation will be a major theme in chapter two, but anyone who served as an apprentice to a burgess or was born to a burgess, could become a burgess and therefore have the right to vote. Poorer burgesses were often able to profit from this vote either through bribery or influence through the provision of food and drink by a candidate. With the right political connections and enough financial capital, they could then enter the inner sanctum of the corporation and thus enter the urban political elite. Outside of the corporation, the middling sorts were susceptible to market fluctuations which could lead them to enter the urban financial elite or, if unsuccessful, could drive them towards poverty.

The first section of this chapter will look at how aristocrats and the rest of the rural nobility were regarded by those socially below them when they visited the borough and whether the local nobility were treated differently to visitors from further afield, such as royalty and foreign dignitaries. The celebration of the visits by nobility were a common focus of local newspaper reports as they symbolised Derby's observance of those socially above them. Analysing the form of these celebrations, how they differed depending on the recipient, and what they tell us regarding how the people of Derby viewed the rural nobility will be the main focus of that section. It will look at the obverse of this phenomenon in that if nobles were continuing to visit the town, they therefore were not putting down roots to become permanent citizens. With newspaper references to nobility visiting the town dwindling towards the end of the period, it is important to note whether this was due to a decreasing lack of interest or a more permanent residency that made their presence less noteworthy for newspapers. The second section will identify the urban gentry and middling sorts in Derby and will also look at how close the barriers were between these groups and whether there was permeability between them and examine the relationship with each other. The final section will look at the culture of petitions and subscriptions within Derby and most notably how they represent moments of cooperation or divisions between economic, social, and political groups. As lists of petitioners and subscribers were often published either as handbills or in the *Derby Mercury,* they serve as important evidence of inter-

[13] Slack, 'Great and Good Towns', p. 363.

social cooperation as rural nobility, urban gentry, and middling sorts appeared together to further the cause of the borough either through solving social ills locally or appealing to parliament on national issues. Although socially diverse, the issues being treated also highlight political differences particularly towards the end of the eighteenth century as more than one petition could be drawn up covering both sides of a national issues such as the American and French Revolutions and slavery.

This chapter will establish the social make-up of the urban elite, and how they interacted with the rural nobility, before later chapters in this thesis look at their religious, political, and economic characteristics. Looking at the visits of the nobility to the town, plus how petitions and charitable subscriptions brought together the urban elite to act on behalf of the borough, this chapter will show a social shift during the eighteenth century as less involvement by rural nobility, and more involvement by the prosperous members of the middling sorts highlights a change in the social make-up of Derby's urban elite.

Urban Presence of the Rural Nobility

The rural nobility held sway over towns in the eighteenth century and at no time was this made clearer than when they entered the urban stage, visiting towns to join in celebrations, exert political pressure, or frequent local culture. But just how common was their appearance in Derby, what brought them to the town and, most importantly, how was their appearance deemed by townsmen? This section will examine the visits of rural nobility in Derby mentioned in the *Derby Mercury* and argue that the diminishing number of visits was not concurrent with a rise in town houses built by the rural nobility thus suggesting a decreasing level of their presence in the town towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Eighteenth-century nobles saw themselves as superior, initially by birth right and then by education. Their education centred on the classics and the 'rightness of patrician rule' leaving no ambiguity in their mind over their social responsibilities.[14] Although this supposed superiority was based solely on the lottery of birth, contemporary political theorists like Thomas Malthus supported the idea that 'improvements in

[14] Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 34.

government must necessarily originate with persons of some education. And these will of course be found among people of property.'[15] Education alone did not translate into social power, though, as 'the prestige of land, wealth and title did not depend upon a stock of technical knowledge' and it was this prestige that was the most palpable presence in urban culture.[16] That said, it was the honour of a noble that was most likely to win recognition and respect and, as 'honour was not heritable', it had to be earnt by each succeeding generation.[17] The influential power of the nobility therefore lay in their landed wealth and education but there was always a need for them to prove their morality and honour which was earnt through their presence amongst the people. Clark noted that deference to the upper classes was not based on mere servility but involved 'sympathetic involvement', reciprocity, and a 'common outlook'.[18] O'Gorman described deference as an 'all-embracing "ideological" view of society' which affirmed the legitimacy of 'accepted institutions, traditions, and values – and of the men who represent these.'[19] This deference was different in urban settings with Ellis surmising that the urban working classes were 'unimpressed by the respect that was supposedly due to those of superior status' with domestic servants who grew up in an urban environment being less desirable as servant than rural candidates due to a 'lack of deference'.[20] This was down to the 'continual renegotiation' of social differences in urban settings caused by an increased rate of exchange.[21] Most importantly for this thesis, social deference, which was crumbling by the 1770s, was the basis of the urban renaissance.[22]

[15] Thomas R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principles of Population*, compiled by Donald Winch (originally published 1798) (Cambridge: 1992), p. 250.
[16] Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London: 2000), p. 13.
[17] Adam Nicholson, *Gentry: Six Hundred Years of a Peculiarly English Class* (London: 2012), p. 195.
[18] Clark, *English Society 1688-1832*, p. 78.
[19] Frank O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in "Unreformed" England: 1760-1832', in *The Journal of Modern History* (56:3, September 1984), p. 395.
[20] Ellis, *The Georgian Town*, p. 69.
[21] Ellis, *The Georgian Town*, p. 70.
[22] Joyce Ellis, 'Regional and County Centres 1700-1840', in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, p. 699.

Figure 5: Thomas Kitchin, after Peter Perez Burdett, *Map of Derbyshire*, 1791 (2nd edition)

Derby was ringed by the estates of nobility (see figure 5). The Curzons (Baron Scarsdales) lived at Kedleston to the northwest of the town and provided several county MPs, The Stanhopes (Earls of Harrington) resided at Elvaston to the southeast and provided several Derby MPs, and the Shirleys (Earls Ferrers) lived at Staunton Harold to the south, in Leicestershire. Closer to the town lived several influential titled families such as the Mundys of Markeaton (northwest), the Wilmots of Osmaston and Chaddesden (south and east) who sat on a variety of local trusts and improvement commissions, and the Harpurs of Calke Abbey (south), often loud opponents of Whig hegemony in the area. The chief family of the county who had major influence in Derby were the Cavendish family whose head was the Duke of Devonshire. They were based at Chatsworth in the centre of the county, 30 miles to the north of Derby, and had a metropolitan seat at Devonshire House.

The movements of these families were a regular feature of the *Derby Mercury* newspaper from its inception in 1732. This was part of the 'process of creating a "national culture"' as interest in the fashions and habits of the upper classes became an essential part of provincial newspaper publishing, as were the reports in the *Mercury* of

the celebrations that occurred when they visited the borough.[23] Of primary concern to the editor of the *Mercury* was the Cavendish family who were the most influential aristocratic family in the county, having an extensive political interest in the borough with the Dukes of Devonshire serving as Lord Lieutenant for the county and other male family members or associates holding at least one county parliamentary seat and one borough seat throughout the period. Their travels were reported on even if they were not passing anywhere near the town. The readers of Derby were made aware if the Duke of Devonshire was travelling to his seat at Chatsworth, to parliament in London, or to duties overseas.[24] Even the luggage of William Cavendish (1698-1755), the 3rd Duke of Devonshire, received a special mention in 1739 when it arrived in Dublin after travelling through a storm, something that was deemed interesting enough to inform the readers.[25]

When members of the Cavendish family did visit the borough, even on the rare occasion they were simply passing through and not staying for an assize, race, or election, it caused scenes of great festivity such as the ringing of bells and vast dinners held at the main inns in the town at the Duke's expense. In 1770, William Cavendish (1748-1811), the 5th Duke of Devonshire, arrived in town with his Uncles, the Lords George (1727-1794), Frederick (1729-1803), and John (1732-1796), the Duke's brother Richard (1752-1781) and the Polish Ambassador, unnamed in the report but presumably Tadeusz Burzynski (1730-1773), and he provided entertainment at the 'chief inns' and a ball at the Assembly Rooms which was provided with the attendance being 'numerous and brilliance'.[26] The visits of the Cavendishes also served as an essential link between local and national politics as members of that family would often visit the borough to inform the town of major national events. The most famous (or infamous) example being when William Cavendish (1640-1707), 4th Earl of Devonshire (later the 1st Duke), delivered the Declaration of William III in Derby's marketplace before moving onto Nottingham after he failed to receive the reaction he was hoping for.[27] Perhaps the greatest physical link with the borough was that the Cavendishes were buried in All

[23] Helen Berry, 'Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press: National and Local Culture in Eighteenth-Century Newcastle Upon Tyne', in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (25:1, 2002), p. 8.
[24] *Derby Mercury*, 30th August 1733.
[25] *Derby Mercury*, 4th October 1739.
[26] *Derby Mercury* 17th August 1770; Tadeusz Burzynski was Ambassador to Great Britain in 1770 so is therefore the most likely candidate.
[27] Robert Simpson, *History and Antiquities of Derby,* Vol 1 (Derby: 1826), pp. 162-3.

Saints' Church. On the death of Lord James Cavendish (c.1678-1751) in 1751, his body was carried by ten burgesses, five aldermen and the mayor to its final resting place.[28]

Other members of the local nobility also passed through the town regularly. Sir Nathanial Curzon (1676-1758), fourth Baronet of Kedleston, was 'met and attended by most of his Tradesmen' when he passed through the town in 1739.[29] Bells were also used to signify the return of Sir John Eardley Wilmot (1709-1792) of Osmaston Hall to his estate for the first time since being knighted in 1753.[30] Borsay has contended that the celebration of visiting nobility served to forge links between rural and urban elites and this appears to be the case especially concerning the periods around elections.[31] Candidates would not only make sure to wine and dine potential voters before an election, which will be discussed further in chapter two, but would also maintain a cordial relationship with Derby's corporation, inviting them to dinners, balls and other celebrations. In 1776, Sir Nathanial Curzon (1726-1804), Baron Scarsdale, invited the mayor and corporation of the borough to Kedleston Hall for dinner and entertainment whilst in 1757 William Cavendish (1720-1764), the 4th Duke of Devonshire, alongside his brothers Frederick and George, came to town and laid on entertainment for the corporation and provided a Ladies ball.[32] The ritualised meeting of rural and urban elites was therefore a constant theme of urban life and would have reinforced upon the people of Derby the avenues of deference that existed in their society.

As highlighted by the visit of the Polish ambassador in 1770, visitors to Derby sometimes included members of the British and European royal families and aristocracy which often attracted more attention than those of rural nobility. When Prince Edward (1739-1767), Duke of York and Albany, passed through on his way to Scarborough in 1763, the streets were lined with spectators trying to catch a glimpse of him, for which he duly obliged by slowing down.[33] The King of Denmark, Christian VII (1749-1808), visited in 1768 on his way to Chatsworth and was greeted in a similar way. As he arrived late, he was too tired to greet people so instead greeted the crowd

[28] *Derby Mercury*, 20th December 1751.
[29] *Derby Mercury,* 7th June 1739.
[30] *Derby Mercury*, 5th September 1753.
[31] Peter Borsay, ''All the Town's a Stage': Urban Ritual and Ceremony 1660-1800', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (London: 1985), p. 232.
[32] *Derby Mercury,* 12th July 1776 and 4th November 1757.
[33] *Derby Mercury,* 15th July 1763.

from a window, illuminated with candles, at the George Inn. What is perhaps most notable about this report in the newspaper is that the King was unable to visit the Silk Mill or the other 'curiosities of the Town' suggesting that there was a set plan by the town's elite to host visiting dignitaries.[34] One such visitor who was able to see these 'curiosities' was Prince George William of Hesse Darmstadt (1722-1782) who was able to undertake the tour whilst staying at the George Inn in 1771, concurrently but separately to Chevalier D'Eon, Charles-Genevieve-Louis-Auguste-André Timothee d'Eon de Beaumont (1728-1810), who does not appear to have been granted a similar offer. For the Prince, his tour began at the Silk Mill and the China Manufactory before going to visit Lord Scarsdale at Kedleston Hall and then to Matlock.[35] The famed Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) had a very similar itinerary when he visited the town in 1777 visiting Kedleston Hall, the china works, and Lombe's Silk Mill though interestingly his visit was not worthy of press attention.[36] This was also the case with Benjamin Franklin's multiple unreported trips to Derby such as in 1771 when he too visited Lombe's Silk Mill and the china works.[37] Perhaps the editors of the *Mercury* were not interested in anyone without a title, no matter how famous.

Derby was a regular stop on Derbyshire tours so benefitted from the increase in tourism in this period.[38] It can therefore be said that the visit of a notary was not simply about deference to the exalted but also a chance for civic pride and public spectacle. This is characterised chiefly by an event in 1778 when the fifth Duke of Devonshire appeared at Markeaton, owned by the Mundy family on the edge of the town, to review the militia with the Duchess, Georgiana (1757-1806), dressed '*en militaire*'. According to the *Mercury* 10,000 people attended the review which is a considerable number given the population of Derby at this time was between 8-10,000.[39] Markeaton was most likely chosen due to the size of the militia, and the predicted number of spectators, being too large for any of the urban green spaces and Markeaton being the closest country house. On the night before the review Georgiana, according to her personal correspondences,

[34] *Derby Mercury,* 9th September 1768.
[35] *Derby Mercury,* 11th October 1771.
[36] H. Kirke, 'Dr Johnson in Derbyshire', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (vol 32, 1910), p. 119.
[37] Jonathan Powers, *Benjamin Franklin and Darwin's "Lunaticks"* (Derbyshire: 2016), p. 48.
[38] Che Binder, *A Tour of the Peak: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Derbyshire, c.1700-1850*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Leicester: 2012), pp. 26-7.
[39] *Derby Mercury,* 8th May 1778.

attended a ball with the Mundy's of Markeaton and the Duke and his militia offices suggesting that the review had been organised sometime in advance.[40]

County towns, such as Derby, which held county courts were very protective over the right to hold assizes with assize week becoming a source of great celebration as it guaranteed visits by the rural nobility. When the assize judge approached the town, it was customary for the High Sheriff and members of the urban elite to ride out to meet him before escorting him into the town. In 1774 it was reported that Sir Henry Harpur (1739-1789), 6th Baronet of Calke Abbey, and a 'numerous concourse of Gentlemen' set out from the George Inn to meet Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780) the assize judge.[41] Similarly in 1778, Sir William Henry Ashurst (1725-1807) was met by Francis Hurt (1722-1783) and a great number of gentlemen and tradesmen.[42] Even bad weather could not endanger this custom as in 1746 when Robert Newton (1713-1789), the High Sheriff, with 30 men, was met at some distance from the town in bad weather, from whence they returned to the George Inn for entertainment.[43] This procedure of meeting outsiders and processing them into town has been regarded as a symbol of accepting them into the community 'on the community's own terms.'[44] This ritual provided the link between the borough and the national legal system and defined Derby's place as the administrative centre of Derbyshire as seen during the 1766 assizes where the assize judge arrived in Derby having already visited Chatsworth and Kedleston.[45] This tradition appears to have been important to the urban elite of the town who by ritualising the start of the assizes were cementing not only the importance of the assizes to the town's identity but also forming a link between the urban and rural.

Entertainment was a key factor in assize week with the perceived success of an assize being judged according to who was in attendance. The 1740 assizes were noted for the presence of the 3rd Duke of Devonshire and the 'greatest Appearance of Gentlemen of Figure as has been seen for many Years.'[46] The assizes of 1755 were said to have seen

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[40] *Letter from Duchess of Devonshire, Georgiana Spencer, to Countess Spencer*, 6th – 12th May 1778 (CS5/212).
[41] *Derby Mercury,* 18th March 1774.
[42] *Derby Mercury,* 20th March 1778.
[43] *Derby Mercury,* 21st March 1746.
[44] Frank O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780-1860', in *Past & Present* (No 135, May 1992), p. 84.
[45] *Derby Mercury*, 18th July 1766.
[46] *Derby Mercury,* 6th August 1740.

the 'greatest Meeting of Gentlemen and Ladies of the first Rank in this County, that has been for some years' for whom a ball was provided 'at which was a very numerous and splendid Appearance of both Sexes.'[47] This is the type of language that was often used to describe race weeks and assemblies, as will be shown in chapter six, therefore showing that assize weeks were just another part of the cultural calendar, rather than simply a legal necessity. The assizes were so socially important that when the contract for lighting the town was running out in 1794, the commissioners of the Paving and Lighting Act (1792) decided to continue lighting the lamps for a further week so as to have them lit during the assizes.[48]

Some rural nobility and gentry had property in Derby but references to them actually staying in the town houses they built are relatively limited, suggesting that Derby lacked a resident noble community such as at Nottingham.[49] This is particularly striking as Schwartz, who based his definition of an eighteenth-century 'leisure town' on the number of employed manservants, shows that 79 residents of Derby were able to employ manservants in 1780 (around 1% of the population and a high percentage compared to other urban centres) thus establishing Derby, at least in his eyes, as a 'leisure town' and 17th on a list of 53 such towns that near-by Nottingham did not make.[50] Corfield, who has challenged Schwartz's theory, used directories to determine the percentage of gentry who appeared. For Shrewsbury, considered a 'residential leisure town', 15% of those featured on a 1775 directory were considered gentry. In Bristol in the same year it was as high as 20%.[51] In Derby's first proper directory of 1790, the representation of gentry was less than 10% (60 gentry in a list of 568 inhabitants) and around half of those were widows or daughters.[52] Schwartz does allow for a five-mile boundary around a town in his study (based on the manservant tax report) which may explain this figure as Derby was ringed by estates and also acknowledges that wealthy businessmen were able to afford manservants which must

[47] *Derby Mercury*, 25th July 1755.
[48] *Paving and Lighting Minute Book 1792-1824*, 10th March 1794 (DLSL DBR/B/55).
[49] Adrian Henstock, 'The Changing Fabric of the Town, 1550-1750', in John V. Beckett (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester: 2006), p. 115.
[50] Leonard Schwartz, 'Residential Leisure Towns in England Towards the End of the Eighteenth Century' in *Urban History* (27:1, 2000), p. 56.
[51] Penelope J. Corfield, 'Business Leaders and Town Gentry in Early Industrial Britain: Specialist Occupations and Shared Urbanism', in *Urban History* (39:1, 2012), p. 43.
[52] Philip Riden (ed.), *Derbyshire Directories 1781-1824* (Chesterfield: 2006).

have been the case in Derby.[53] The Cavendish family are said to have owned a townhouse in a prominent position in the Corn Market but references to them using it are lacking, being just one of many other properties they owned in urban areas throughout the country.[54] When the Duke and his family passed through Derby on their many travels, they were often noted as stopping at the George Inn rather than this house which lay just down the road. If the house was used it was likely to have been by either the Duke's extended family or their chosen political candidates when visiting the borough, but references to this are absent.

This is different to neighbouring Nottingham where one of the Duke of Newcastle's main residences, though not the principal residence, until the late-eighteenth century, was perched on a hill overlooking the town.[55] Not only did this remind the townspeople living under its shadow of the Duke's influence but the town became a resort with the urban culture radiating from the house, driven by its presence.[56] Derby did not have this. The other interested rural nobility in the area all lived close to the town meaning a well-established town house was not necessary. It is therefore curious that Chalklin has also stated that by 1774, most of the Derbyshire gentry spent much of their year in Derby.[57] As has been discussed, the *Derby Mercury* often referred to families such as the Curzons of Kedleston, the Mundys of Markeaton, and the Wilmots of Chaddesden and Osmaston returning to their family seats in the countryside surrounding the town rather than spending time in the town itself. Those from slightly further afield, such as the Vernon's of Sudbury, the Harpurs of Calke, and the Stanhopes of Elvaston, plus the Coke family who resided at Holkham Hall in Norfolk, all provided parliamentary candidates in this period and therefore had some interest in Derby's urban affairs but do not appear to have remained long enough for them to build town houses. Borsay argued that rural elites built town houses to closely monitor the political scene, generate business for local traders and that it was a 'clear statement of commitment to the town.'[58] It is therefore open to interpretation that the absence of a resident rural

[53] Schwartz, 'Residential Leisure Towns', pp. 60-61.
[54] Maxwell Craven, *The Derby Townhouse* (Derby: 1987), p47.
[55] Peter Borsay, 'The Landed Elite and Provincial Towns in Britain 1660-1800' in *The Georgian Group Journal* (Vol 13, 2003), p. 292.
[56] John Patten, *English Towns 1500-1700* (Folkestone: 1978), p. 209; Peter Borsay, 'A County Town in Transition: The Great Fire of Warwick, 1694', in Peter Borsay and Lindsay Proudfoot (eds.), *Provincial Towns in Early Modern England and Ireland* (New York: 2002), p. 169.
[57] Christopher Chalklin, *English Counties and Public Building 1650-1830* (London: 1998), p. 50.
[58] Borsay, 'Landed Elite and Provincial Towns', p. 287.

nobility in Derby implies it was politically stable enough to not need direct noble intervention and that local trade did not need the boost that came with their physical presence. When the races came round, which are discussed in chapter six, Derby experienced an increase in gentry inhabitants and advertisements appeared in the newspaper from townsmen offering their own lodgings for noble guests such as the Ward family in St Mary's Gate whose house, for sale in 1741, 'for many years had accommodated Several Gentlemen', as was the house of John Trubshaw (d. 1773), joiner, in Sadlergate in 1770.[59] This suggests that the houses of the urban gentry, and the various coaching inns in the town were enough to satisfy the wants of the town's noble visitors placing Derby as a town worth visiting by nobility but not worth staying in long term.

This section has argued that the physical presence of the rural nobility in Derby was occasional, with the celebration of their arrival being a notable event. There is little evidence of the rural nobility laying down roots in the town with only a few town houses being erected by certain nobles but with little evidence of them being regularly used. When they are recorded as being present in the town, they are usually passing through to their country estates, or they stayed either at one of the prominent local inns or at a house of a member of the urban gentry. Although their physical presence was infrequent, the fact their whereabouts were assiduously recorded in the *Mercury*, and that their arrival was celebrated, shows that there was a thirst by the people of the town for this interaction. What is the notable is that these reports begin to tail off in the late 1780s, the period in which Ellis claims that the demographic and economic stresses in urban areas were diminishing social deference, either through a lack of visiting from the nobility or through a lack of interest in their visits by the people of the town. The former is most likely as Derby's urban gentry were becoming more dominant in the latter part of the eighteenth century, taking up more of the parliamentary seats and being part of a cultural shift as borough society no longer looked towards rural paternalists.

[59] *Derby Mercury,* 14th January 1741 and 31st August 1770.

The Middling Sorts and the Urban Elite

The urban elite contained members from both the gentry and the middling sorts, who, as Ellis has argued, were intermixed. Even the most successful members of the urban elite 'retained strong links with the broader ranks of the "middling sorts"'.[60] They were composed of 'minor gentry, retired professionals and tradesmen, but also the upper ranks of the acting trading and professional communities'.[61] Stobart used the term 'urban gentry' to describe urban social elites, characterised by their political activity and economic or professional success.[62] In Derby, the term 'gentlemen' was not used by economic and political elites until the very end of the eighteenth century after they had established themselves as members of the urban elite through their roles in the professions or as successful manufacturers. With the previous section establishing that the level of physical influence that the rural nobility had in Derby was diminishing throughout the eighteenth century, this section will show how the more prominent members of the middling sorts rose to replace the rural nobility in the ranks of the urban elite by the end of the century.[63] It will also show how they achieved this through emulating the rural nobility, rather than replacing them, and how they established an 'image and ethos' that Corfield has placed as central to the continuity of an urban elite.[64]

The most prominent example of the urban elite attempting to replicate the rural elites is through the use of the term 'gentleman'. There are several different definitions of a gentlemen from contemporary writers with three coming from Guy Miege (1644-c.1718) alone. Miege argued that a gentleman was someone who was descended from a good family with a coat of arms which he then changed in the post-Restoration era to someone without a coat of arms but with a genteel and liberal education before a final definition in 1740 of someone who was simply not a commoner.[65] Ultimately a gentleman was deemed part of the 'quality' and was awarded such a title 'by a subtle mixture of individual assertion and social acceptance.'[66] Anyone who was seen to be acting the gentlemen was ultimately believed to be one. To act the gentleman though

[60] Jon Stobart, 'Who were the Urban Gentry? Social Elites in an English Provincial Town c.1680-1760', in *Continuity and Change* (26:1, 2011) p. 108; Ellis, *Georgian Town*, p. 72.
[61] Ellis, 'Regional and County Centres', p. 691.
[62] Stobart, 'Who were the Urban Gentry?', p107.
[63] Peter Clark, 'Introduction', in Clark (ed.), *Transformation of English Provincial Towns*, p. 34.
[64] Penelope Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: 1982), p. 132.
[65] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford: 1991), pp. 226-7.
[66] Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 12.

was not to simply be moral and gracious, it involved the same socially restrictive rules that governed the nobility. Borsay has contended that what he defines as the post-Restoration urban renaissance created a widening gap between polite and popular culture and it can be argued that crossing from the latter to the former made you a gentleman.[67]

Perhaps the best example of how the middling sorts understood the process in which acting the gentleman could make you a gentleman can be seen in a letter sent from Jedediah Strutt (1726-1797) to his son William Strutt (1756-1830) in 1774 after Jedidiah had read the famous letters of Philip Stanhope (1694-1773), 4th Earl of Chesterfield, to his son regarding genteel manners (published posthumously in 1774):

> I need not tell you that you are not to be a nobleman nor prime minister, but you may possibly be a Tradesman of some emminance [sic] & such you will necessarily have connections with Mankind & the World, and that will make it absolutely necessary to know them both; & you may be assured if you add to the little learning & improvement you have hitherto had, the Manners, the Air, the genteel address, & polite behaviour of a gentleman, you will abundantly find your acc[oun]t in it in all & every transaction of your future life.[68]

A wheelwright from Findern, Jedediah became a successful merchant and manufacturer, and his sons, William and Joseph (1765-1844) became prominent members of the Derby urban elite, sitting on the corporation and improvement commissions. Later, William's son, Edward Strutt (1801-1880), became Lord Belper in 1856: he, like his father and grandfather, maintained an active role in the family business. The trajectory of the Strutts is the best local example of the rise of a manufacturing family into the peerage, far outstripping Jedidiah's prediction.

Although the individual professions, (lawyers, bankers, clergy, and doctors) will be discussed in later chapters, they are essential to an understanding of the urban elite especially when discussing this new wealth of the middling sorts. The majority of those who have written about the eighteenth-century middle class have referred to the

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[67] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 285.
[68] Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England* (New Haven: 2018), p. 84; Robert S. Fitton and Alfred P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights* (Manchester: 1958), p. 145.

professions in some detail, with Corfield's work the most prominent, and as this case study demonstrates, they played a major role in all aspects of urban government and life. Borsay has offered an overview by placing the professions and their specialist skills as defining urbanity in the eighteenth century with county towns and provincial capitals in particular possessing a large legal and diocesan community.[69] Ellis has described the 'industrial and commercial strength' of Nottingham in the long eighteenth century as having derived from 'providing technical, financial and marketing services' to the neighbourhood whilst Everitt has noted that 'even relatively small and slow-expanding county capitals, like Northampton, need to be visualized as vital nurseries of skills'.[70] Ellis has also highlighted that the smooth running of the economies of urban centres required a 'substantial core of comparatively stable and professional families' whose activities were central to the social and political life of the town.[71] Derby can certainly fit into this model, minus the large diocesan community, as the most prominent families throughout the period were lawyers, bankers, and doctors. The influence of these families was not just limited to within their respective professions, but they had their hands on almost every aspect of Derby's urban life.

The last step in fulfilling the role of the gentleman, after obtaining a title and an air of gentility, was to have the spending power of the gentry, using it to gain entry into polite society. The members of the professions and the better-off middling sorts that joined the urban elite 'appeared to share an active, competitive and commercial attitude to wealth.' Opulent 'merchants, affluent bankers, eminent doctors and expensive lawyers' patronised the same schools, societies, charities, painters and architects, and resorts as the rural gentry.[72] The 'growing numbers and surplus wealth' of the middling sorts was 'a dynamic factor in generating demand for cultural products' and has thus been identified as the basis for the urban renaissance and because the middling sorts were primarily urban, this renaissance too was primarily urban.[73] Items and services that were the essence of middling sorts culture such as 'clocks, laudanum, fire insurance,

[69] Peter Borsay, 'The Development of Provincial Urban Culture c.1680-1760, in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (New York: 1995), p. 174.
[70] Joyce Ellis, ''The Stocking County': Industrial and Urban Growth in Nottingham 1680-1840', in Penelope Lane and John Stobart (eds.), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700-1840* (Leicester: 2000), p. 101; Alan Everitt, 'Country, County and Town: Patterns of Regional Evolution in England', in Borsay (ed.), *Eighteenth Century Town*, pp. 108-9.
[71] Ellis, 'Regional and County Centres 1700-1840', p. 690.
[72] Ellis, *The Georgian Town*, p. 72.
[73] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 222.

street-lighting, novels, newspapers, tea-drinking, and the three-piece suit' have come to represent the wider eighteenth-century consumer revolution.[74] Cultural pursuits such as philosophical societies, lending libraries and lectures were also aimed primarily at the middling sorts and subsequently frequented by them.[75] The famous Derby painter Joseph Wright (1734-1797) and his sitters, alongside architect Joseph Pickford (1734-1782) and his patrons, provide the best examples of the new urban cultural network that cemented the links between the old and new urban elite. Wright is famous as an enlightenment painter, painting the prominent figures of Derby's scientific culture such as John Whitehurst (1713-1788) and Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) whilst also painting members of the Markeaton hunt, a circle of gentry figures led by the Mundys of Markeaton. Joseph Pickford is famous for his urban projects such as St Helen's House and his own residence on Friargate but was first introduced to the town having worked on nearby Kedleston Hall, the seat of the Curzon family.[76] New money poured into a new urban cultural landscape served as the catalyst in the change within the urban elite.

The economic prosperity of the urban middling sorts increased in the eighteenth century to the point where it challenged the hegemony of the rural nobility in urban centres. The physical presence of the urban elite became characterised more by the middling sorts, yet it was through their patronage of the values of the nobility, and their cultural networks, that this switch was made possible. Even as the rural nobility was removing themselves from urban centres, they and the urban gentry and middling sorts still cooperated on issues facing Derby, to which this thesis turns now.

Petitioning, Charity, and Urban Elite Collectivism

This section will identify two types of interactions between the rural nobility and urban elites, one physical and one economic. These interactions show how cooperation between the retreating rural nobility and emerging urban elite could occur either to solve local issues or to promote Derby in issues of national importance. That said, although healing social differences, it could exacerbate political divisions, creating the vertical divides that Barry has shown existed within the middling sorts. Barry also

[74] Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*, p. 336.
[75] Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: Science and Culture in British Urban Society 1700-1850* (Manchester: 2009), p. 138.
[76] Maxwell Craven, *John Whitehurst of Derby: Clockmaker and Scientist 1713-88* (Ashbourne: 1996), p. 62; Maxwell Craven and Michael Stanley, *The Derbyshire Country House: 1* (Ashbourne: 2001), p. 21.

argues that that within these divides, the middling sorts could also exert pressure upwards.[77] Petitioning the government on various national issues was one such activity which usually required public meetings to be called to draft out a response to the king or government either in support or opposition to a recent event or decision. Organisation of charity in response to economic or agricultural difficulties was another activity that required cooperation amongst the urban and country elite. Subscription lists were created and printed in bills containing the names of those contributing and the amount donated. Petitions were produced in a similar way but with the financial contribution made primarily by the leading economic figures to ensure it found its way to parliament. These lists gave urban elites the chance to join, at least on paper, with the rural nobility in a united front, representing Derby and Derbyshire, town and country, in times of political or economic difficulty.

Petitions were a chance for members of the middling sorts, urban gentry, and rural nobility to work together and for those without the vote to participate in popular politics.[78] Petitioning in Derby began appearing in the *Derby Mercury* from the late 1760s and can be separated into three groups. Firstly, there were those petitions led by the rural nobility in a bid to challenge or support a national issue; second there were those led primarily by Derby's corporation so that the borough's opinion on a national matter was heard, though whether it was the whole town's opinion will be considered. Lastly, there were those petitions sent to the corporation from townsmen to improve their own situation. Petitions show that there was an opportunity for those not engaged directly with urban politics to have their opinion heard in what was a politically restrictive urban scene, but also to stand firm on an issue with members of society that otherwise would not have congregated in any other situation.

The first type of petition this section will look at are those led primarily by rural nobility but which sought the cooperation of the people of Derby, often on issues of national importance. In 1769, for example, a meeting was called at the Town Hall, led by the local Whig grandees, Lords George, Frederick and John Cavendish plus Godfrey Bagnold Clarke (1724-1774) and Wenman Coke (1717-1776) which petitioned the king regarding measures taken by the monarch in the infamous Middlesex election involving

[77] Barry, 'Introduction', in Barry and Brooks, *Middling Sort of People*, p. 22.
[78] Philip Loft, 'Petitioning and Petitioners to the Westminster Parliament, 1660-1788', in *Parliamentary History* (38:3, 2019), p. 350.

John Wilkes (1725-1797). However, although they sent the petition, the participants did not form a county association as neighbouring counties had done.[79] As was the case nationally, the pro-Wilkes petitions were led primarily by Whigs. In 1775 a more politically partisan petition appeared with Wenman Coke, alongside the prominent independent, Daniel Parker Coke (1745-1825), taking the lead supporting the King during the American Revolution, one of 150 petitions of support sent to the monarch for this reason.[80] It stated:

> 'Most Gracious Sovereign, We your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Principle Inhabitants, of the borough of Derby, truly sensible of the many Blessings we enjoy under your Majesty's wise and equitable Administration. I beg Leave to approach your Throne with the most sincere Gratitude and unalterable Allegiance.

The petition goes on to ask for the restoration of peace in the colonies with no blood loss unless the colonists continue to disobey the king. What is most interesting about this petition is the claim that it came from 'loyal Subjects, the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Principle (sic) Inhabitants of the borough of Derby.' By examining the list of signatories and cross-checking them with the poll book for the election of that same year, it appears that of the 321 signatories, 84 voted for Daniel Parker Coke at the most recent election in 1775, with almost all those noted as gentry, and voting for Coke in that election, being signees. 26 of the signatories had voted for the Whig candidate with only one serving alderman signing his name to this petition.[81] 321 signatories is a particularly low number, compared to the examples given below, suggesting a lack of consensus from the town on the issue though there are no references to a counter petition being created. A more politically diverse meeting was held in 1792 to discuss the question of slavery with a seemingly equal distribution of political opinions being apparent when viewing the list of attendees. The petition, signed by 3369 individuals, was supported by Whigs such as the Strutts, Gisbornes, and Cromptons with Tories such as Sacheverell Pole, and James Simpson.[82] A counter petition was established which warned against

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[79] *Derby Mercury,* 17th November 1769; John Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832* (Cambridge: 1973), p. 78.
[80] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, revised edition (New Haven: 2014), p. 139.
[81] *Derby Mercury,* 27th October and 4th November 1775.
[82] *Derby Mercury,* 8th, 15th, and 29th March 1792; Alasdair Kean, *Anti-Slavery in Derby and its Region* (Derby: 2007), p. 20.

unqualified abolition led by Tories such as Bache Heathcote.[83] Petitions, although potentially crossing social boundaries to show united action, could widen political divides.

The Derby-led petitions that were politically heterogeneous were those that sought to address issues which would have local effects and were led by the borough's traders alongside the corporation. Petitions to remove the bounty on the exportation of corn in 1765, the removal of the tax on land carriage in 1782, the refusal to pay shop tax in 1786, and the acceptance of Bank of England notes in 1797 are examples of this.[84] The latter petition, for which a list of signees was printed, shows that it was led obviously by the bankers of the town, but also the tradesmen and local gentry.[85] The chronological grouping of these petitions highlights the wider trend that petitioning became more common as the century progressed and in Derby, the majority were aimed at issues regarding trade and manufacture thus representing the economic interests of the town. This was most notable in a meeting at the County Hall in 1783 regarding equal representation in parliament, the same year the Yorkshire Association were pushing for parliamentary reform and an increase in county representation.[86] At the time of the meeting the land tax ratio between Cornwall and Derbyshire was 8 to 6 but the discrepancy in MPs was 44 to 4 (including boroughs). The assembled gentry saw Derbyshire losing heavily in any parliamentary vote involving minerals so they created a petition that found support in all the Derbyshire towns it was sent to.[87] Group lobbying between towns was also common as seen in a group petition between the towns of Derby, Nottingham, Leicester and Northampton which appeared in 1784 in which they agreed to petition the government to receive London fuel in the same manner as Bristol.[88] The collective action of these towns is not surprising as they were all part of 'stocking country', as described by Derby historian William Hutton, and

[83] *Derby Mercury,* 8th, 15th, and 29th March 1792; Alasdair Kean, *Anti-Slavery in Derby and its Region* (Derby: 2007), p. 20.
[84] *Derby Mercury*, 8th February 1765, 11th April 1782, 12th January 1786, and 2nd March 1797.
[85] *Derby Mercury,* 2nd and 9th March 1797.
[86] Ian R. Christie, 'The Yorkshire Association, 1780-4: A Study in Political Organization' in *The Historical Journal* (3:2, 1960), p144.
[87] *Derby Mercury,* 30th January 1783.
[88] Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort', in Barry and Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People*, p. 90; *Derby Mercury,* 28th October and 4th November 1784.

economic issues from outside this area that affected this industry would have impacted upon all of them.[89]

Like petitions, charitable subscriptions showed socially diverse cooperation on certain issues. Where they differ to petitions though is that the issues were suffered by only the lower classes. These subscriptions were reactionary, mostly created in response to unforeseen (but not unusual) issues such as fires, bad harvests, or harsh winters and are evidence of group action towards relieving the poor. The various members of the Drewry family who printed the *Derby Mercury* in the eighteenth century were quick to exhort their readers to act in such cases. In 1739, they hoped that Derby was willing to 'follow the good Example set them by our great Metropolis, as well as other Cities and Boroughs' in collecting for the 'Relief of their Poor in this severe season…and we hope will excite our neighbouring Towns to imitate.'[90] In 1784, the *Mercury* once again tried to provoke action but had a more altruistic approach noting that the 'Inclemency of the present Season, gives the Opulent an Opportunity of gratifying their Feelings, by exploring the Habitations of their Fellow Creatures, and wiping the Tear from the Cheek of silent Penury and Want.' Although this latter approach directly refers to the benefit charity will have for the poor, it still offered the benefactors the 'Opportunity of gratifying their feelings.'[91]

An examination of various eighteenth-century Derby subscription lists show that they tended to follow a similar format with the amount being subscribed being based on social rank. For the subscription for the relief of the poor in 1795, Lord George Cavendish (1754-1834), 1st Earl of Burlington, and the corporation gave £50 each, those labelled as esquires gave between £5.5s and £7.7s as did wealthy manufacturers, the individual alderman gave between £1.1s and £3.3s with the remainder giving between 10s.6d and £1.1.s.[92] The subscription for coals for the poor in 1793 follows a similar structure with Edward Coke (1758-1837), MP for Derby, giving £50, the corporation giving £21, Edward Miller Mundy (1750-1822), MP for Derbyshire, giving £20, the

[89] Joyce Ellis, 'Industrial and Urban Growth in Nottingham, 1680-1840', in Stobart and Raven (eds.), *Towns, Regions and Industries: Urban Industrial Change in the Midlands, c.1700-1840* (Manchester: 2008), p. 151.
[90] *Derby Mercury,* 7th February 1739.
[91] *Derby Mercury*, 30th December 1784.
[92] *Derby Mercury,* 16th June 1795.

esquires providing between £5 and £10, and the alderman giving between £3 and £6.[93] Only in the subscription for the relief of sufferers of a fire in 1799 is this hierarchy less evident where George Venables-Vernon (1735-1813), 2nd Baron Vernon and his wife, Jane Fauquier (1748-1823), only gave £1.1s each, as did Francis Noel Clark Mundy (1739-1815) of Markeaton, whereas William and Joseph Strutt each gave £2.2s with every other subscriber giving £1.1s or less.[94] This is perhaps down to the middling sorts and urban gentry being more aware of the devastating nature of fire to a trader's livelihood but is also an indication of how wealthy some trading families, such as the Strutts, had become by the 1790s.

Petitioning and charitable subscriptions are just two of the ways that the rural and urban gentry, and the middling sorts acted collectively. Whereas other examples of inter-social interaction were more physical, and form the main body of this thesis, it was essential that this section showed how that being part of the urban elite involved taking an active interest in the borough's political or economic standing through either relieving the poor or representing an opinion on national and local issues. The charitable subscriptions particularly highlight the hierarchy of interest within the urban elite as although rural nobility and members of the middling sorts appeared acting collectively on the same issue, the different levels of financial contributions demonstrate social differences. Importantly though for the rest of this thesis, where it came to the running of urban affairs, cooperation within the elite was paramount.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the various social groups that existed in Derby in the eighteenth century. Their interaction, cooperation or conflict will be the running theme of this thesis. The subscriptions and charitable donations show a willingness, or sense of paternalistic responsibility, to help those social and financially below them. The petitions demonstrate how they were willing to cooperate politically to represent the opinions of the town to central government. As the century progressed, the rural gentry

[93] *Derby Mercury,* 10th January 1793.
[94] *Derby Mercury*, 7th February 1799.

withdrew from urban life to be replaced by the more prosperous members of the middling sorts who formed the urban elite.

The petitions and subscription lists referenced above demonstrate this occurring as those created towards the end of the period were less dominated by gentry than those previously. References in the *Derby Mercury* to the nobility visiting the town also decrease towards the end of the century. The petitions show a divide in the politics of the town as in the case of the rival committees formed to consider the question of slavery or in the heavily Tory petition sent to the king regarding the political situation in America before the revolution. There were economic differences too highlighted by the hierarchical nature of subscription lists with every rung of the social ladder knowing their expected financial contribution. Included in these lists were members of the corporation and electoral candidates who would have been required to act on such matters by convention, rather than law, as the political representatives of the borough and it is to that which this thesis turns now.

Chapter 2: Derby's Corporation and Political Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century

Eighteenth-century Derby was an incorporated borough which sent two MPs to parliament and has been regarded by historians as an oligarchy, controlled by the interests of the Cavendish family and their Whig supporters.[1] This was also the view held by the corporation's political opponents during that period. What has yet to be determined though is exactly how closed or oligarchic it was, the political and religious make-up of the families who dominated it, how this may have altered over the period, and how they were able to gain and then hold onto power up until the Municipal Corporations Act (1835). This chapter will examine the corporation and electoral politics in eighteenth-century Derby, arguing that this was not peaceably controlled by a single faction, as has been suggested, but instead was characterised by political struggles through contested elections, corporate in-fighting, and factional strife. It will also show how this political strife, and the restrictions in place to prevent the participation of certain areas of society, meant that the political elite were not synonymous with the economic elite in local urban society until the very end of the century.

Derby's main political body was the corporation, founded on ancient unwritten custom yet confirmed by various royal charters, the last of which was granted before the start of our period, in 1682. Derby was one of about 200 corporate towns which formed around half of the total number of towns in England in this period.[2] Keith-Lucas has provided a general model for eighteenth-century corporations, whilst acknowledging that the diverse nature of their membership, electoral restrictions, and powers, makes generalisations difficult. Broadly, they were 'self-elected bodies' which largely consisted of 'church-going, well-to-do, professional men and major tradesmen', although as we will see in the case of Derby, some towns do not fit this picture very well.[3] Innes and Rogers have maintained that the self-electing nature of corporate bodies facilitated

[1] Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: Science and Culture in British Urban Society 1700-1850* (Manchester: 2009), p. 260; James Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics': Episodes from Derbyshire c.1660-1760*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, (Durham University, 2018), p. 42.
[2] John Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832* (Cambridge: 1973), p. 29.
[3] Bryan Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System* (London: 1980), p. 13 and p. 19.

divergences but also that 'borough electors were far from being entirely plastic in their patron's hands' suggesting cooperation between corporate bodies and the wider burgess pool.[4] This case study of Derby's eighteenth-century corporation demonstrates how having a self-elected corporation did not automatically translate to political control. Clark concluded that for Gloucester, the social structure of the corporation followed the economic structure of the town, which in their case was traders. For Derby, the large number of dissenter manufacturers and professionals who were the most notable members of the urban elite, were not members of the corporation until very late in the century. Also, although it will be shown that the Derby corporation needed the external forces of the rural nobility and burgess support to function, these relationships also caused conflicts and were not always straightforward.

This chapter will make some comparisons between Derby's Georgian corporation and that of its near neighbours, Nottingham and Leicester. Nottingham's corporation was closed although well respected for its treatment of the poor.[5] In the period between 1785 and 1835, the Presbyterians tended to control the Nottingham corporation although they did not outnumber high churchmen.[6] For Leicester, Temple-Patterson has shown how the town by the late-eighteenth century had a widening gap between the municipality and the town community due to dissenter manufacturers and shop keepers forming the body of the town whilst high churchmen formed the body of the corporation, an exact reverse of the situation in Nottingham.[7] According to Greaves, Leicester's corporation in the long eighteenth century saw themselves more as property-holders than a governing body, were uninterested in public improvement and felt no responsibility to the public of the town which prevented them from spending funds for public purposes.[8] This chapter will show that although Derby's corporation had a different social structure to those of Nottingham and Leicester, their approach to the roles and responsibilities was very similar.

Clark and Slack have described incorporation as the recognition of the 'right of the community to act collectively' but corporations were never expected to be truly

[4] Joanna Innes and Nicholas Rogers, 'Politics and Government 1700-1840', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Vol 2 1540-1840* (Cambridge: 2000), pp. 539 and 557.
[5] Duncan Gray, *Nottingham through 500 years: A History of Town Government* (Nottingham: 1960), p. 116.
[6] Malcolm I. Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835* (Oxford: 1969), pp. 128, 130, and 140.
[7] Albert Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester* (Leicester: 1954), p. 28.
[8] Robert W. Greaves, *The Corporation of Leicester 1689-1836* (London: 1939), pp. 1, 28, and 34.

representative of the people, even by contemporaries.[9] Yet even the more open corporations included only a third of the population of the borough with the more 'closed' corporations including only a very small handful of the leading urban elite of the town. Often, even though the population increased throughout the eighteenth century, the number admitted to the corporation did not increase thus causing a decreasing percentage of representation in the town.[10] A contemporary description of municipal corporations stresses how much they sought to act as a single body and were conferred with a legal status protecting the individual members from being sued for the actions of the body as a whole.[11] This may explain why corporations were so eager to close ranks and deny entry to outsiders as a unified approach in the exercising of corporate powers was essential to maintain peace. Admitting someone with alternate views may have destabilised this.

The main benefit that came with corporate status was the right to elect members of Parliament. The qualifications within the boroughs determining who had the right to vote in those elections varied significantly from one town to the other with some electorates limited to the high bench of the corporation and some as large as all rate-paying citizens. Corporate elections have been examined at length due to their importance for national as well as local politics. Innes and Rogers noted a general decline in contested elections between 1715 and 1802 though whether this was a signal of greater elite control of elections or a side-effect of relative peace, they could not determine.[12] Cannon has shown that parliament spent a lot of time in the aftermath of general elections considering petitions, sometimes as many as 60, from unsuccessful factions in local elections suggesting a distinct lack of electoral peace.[13] It was not guaranteed that an election would even be held. Avoiding an election was more common at county level due to the expense of a country electorate travelling to electoral

[9] Mark Girouard, *The English Town* (New Haven: 1990), p. 25; Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (Oxford: 1976), p. 6.
[10] Penelope J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: 1982), pp. 150-151; Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*, p. 87.
[11] Steward Kyd, *A Treatise on the Law of Corporations*, quoted in Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society, and Culture* (New York: 1999), p. 34.
[12] Innes and Rogers, 'Politics and Government', p. 558; Mark Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic: Officeholding in Early Modern England', in Tim Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke: 2001), p. 158.
[13] Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, p. 30.

centres.[14] Pre-election meetings were instead held where a small section of the urban or rural elite would decide on a representative thus further diminishing the direct influence of the electoral pool. But whether contested or not, the potential candidates still required the support from the electorate and town as a whole. Chalus has shown that borough politics needed the constant attention of elites even during the time between elections, which was evident not just from the candidates canvassing the town pre-election, but also their wider family as well, giving women a chance to participate in politics.[15] The poorer freemen sold their votes and Fayrer-Jones, in her study of elite interference in Usk and Cardiff, has shown how the number of letters to the Marquises of Bute from townspeople asking for help and patronage, increased noticeably during election periods, demonstrating that voters were more than willing to use their votes to barter.[16] Local issues also had to be acknowledged by candidates as shown in the main period of enclosure between 1785 and 1853 but also in Derby in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century when navigation of the Derwent became a prominent issue and could make or break electoral careers.[17]

The Municipal Corporation Report of 1833 described how the corporation of Derby had been 'almost uniformly composed of persons having one opinion upon political subjects' and that they 'wished to avail themselves of the interest of the Cavendish family'.[18] William Hutton writing in 1791 was one of the few contemporary local historians to address the question of this influence directly which he saw as positive. He wrote that the 'Devonshire interest in the choice of representatives is very considerable; the amiable character of the family, and their repeated acts of kindness, have justly endeared them to the inhabitants.'[19] More recent historians have emphasised the lack of contested elections. According to Elliott, the 'growing economic prosperity, consumption and the encouragement towards greater social unity provided by urban

[14] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 44.
[15] Elaine Chalus, 'Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (Harlow, 1997), p. 159,
[16] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 22; Elizabeth Fayrer-Jones, '"Making Him and Offer he Can't Refuse": Corruption, Coercion and Aristocratic Landowners in Nineteenth-century Urban Wales', in *International Journal of Regional and Local History* (14:2, 2019), p. 67.
[17] Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham*, pp. 122-3; Jeremy Black, 'Derby Election of 1722', in *Derbyshire Miscellany* (Vol 12: Pt 2, Autumn 1989), p. 38; Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics'*, pp. 110-1.
[18] Alexander E. Cockburn and Edward Rushton, *Report from the Commissioners on Municipal Corporations in England and Wales, Report on the Borough of Derby (Derbyshire)*, c.1833, pp. 1857-8.
[19] William Hutton, *The History of Derby*, 2nd edition with additions by J.B. Nichols (London: 1817), p. 103.

public culture, apart from occasional marks of discontent' ensured 'little open hostility towards the Cavendish Whig hegemony' whilst Craven has also taken this view, stating that the 'hereditary elite' held a 'virtual monopoly' led by the Duke. [20] In fact, as the evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates, there was much hostility, particularly at election times, with riots, protests, and even a court case being the result of contested elections. Even uncontested elections show Tory dissent as both the sense of the people and of the rural gentry was needed before a straight-forward, pro-Cavendish, decision could be made. For the Cavendish family to retain their political influence, Derby's elections needed their constant attention.

As most of the records of the Derby corporation were destroyed by fire in 1841, this chapter utilises other sources including the Municipal Corporation report of 1833, reports in local newspapers especially the *Derby Mercury* which were used to advertise official corporation events and actions, poll books and lists of corporation members. Derby electoral poll books have only been used by historians sparingly, most recently in a PhD thesis by Riordan looking at Toryism in the borough in the first half of the eighteenth century.[21] Whereas Riordan examined the trades of the voters, this thesis considers voting patterns, the role of honorary burgesses and how the votes of corporation members operated to see how town politics translated into electoral politics and *vice versa*. A collection of letters sent from corporation members to the Cavendish family, now held at Chatsworth House, help provide a narrative of the heavily contested elections of 1748 and 1775. These are a source that has not been fully utilised, but it actually sheds much light on the processes behind Derby's eighteenth-century elections.

With the 1682 town charter as a starting point, the first half of the chapter analyses the eighteenth-century Derby corporation in relation to the findings of the Municipal Corporation report of 1833, which judged all corporate boroughs in the kingdom. The first section examines the composition of the corporation and the officers that it appointed, comparing it to other boroughs in the region, to determine how 'open' it was. The effectiveness of the corporation and its officers in handling their responsibilities will be analysed in the second section placing it in the wider historiographical debate of

[20] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*, p. 17; Maxwell Craven, *Secret Derby* (Stroud: 2016), p. 48.
[21] Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics'.*

corporations and whether accusations of corruption can be fairly placed. The third section explores the social profile and the qualifications needed to become a member before showing how certain families were able to monopolise the top offices of the corporation. Finally, the physical presence of the corporation and their use of ritual in the urban arena will be discussed as this was essential to forming links between the urban political elite, the burgesses, and the people of the town.

The second half of the chapter explores how the borough experienced elections for members of parliament. This provides an important insight into the actions of the rural and urban elite and their intentions whilst also allowing us to assess levels of conflict and division within urban society, exacerbated by elections. Influencing elections or serving as candidates was the primary focus of the rural nobility in boroughs and the main reason that the rural nobility frequented urban centres. Candidates and their families descended on Derby in the run up to elections, canvassing burgess voters and holding entertainments to garner the support from the corporation and urban elite. Much money was expended by candidates on dinners, balls, and bribing the electorate with food, drink, and entertainment. Often, the election of MPs was decided by a handful of nobles but when it became contested, and a vote was required, the borough became a battlefield of influence, accusations and sometimes physical violence. During elections, the town and its burgesses could feel at the centre of national politics, made evident by the physical presence of the upper classes during these times.

The rural nobility, who had interests in Derby, made continuous efforts to control the politics of the borough. The Derby corporation was patronised by the Whig Dukes of Devonshire who always had a major influence on its political character, but this was qualified by negotiation with urban elites and sometimes contested. The Derby corporation was led primarily by the professionals who held the major positions at the top of the hierarchy and supported the Duke's interest whereas the main body of freemen were largely Tory. The roles of elite social groups were not solidly defined in this period and this chapter will show that power fluctuated between different social and political factions, with conflict rising between town and country, Whig and Tory, and even within the corporation itself.

Derby's Eighteenth-Century Corporation

It has been estimated that there were around 1,100 towns in England and Wales by the time of the 1835 Reform Act, yet only 246 were incorporated and of those only 158 were parliamentary boroughs able to elect MPs. Derby was therefore part of a fairly small minority.[22] Most towns either had a seigneurial or manorial form of local government 'often relying on a locally improvised mix of institutions to order their affairs' whereas incorporated boroughs had, in theory, a single ruling entity in the corporation.[23] Corporate status was seen as a mark of success with the monarch, through the town charter, acknowledging the importance of the town in a national context giving the town the right to hold courts, to be exempt from certain tolls, and to sue and be sued as a single body. The date some corporations were founded has never been fully determined and the rights of prescriptive charters, such as those awarded to Derby, pre-date corporate status. The ways in which corporations behaved varied across the county.[24] One commentator, in a 1778 political pamphlet, described Derby's corporation as a prescriptive borough where the rights and privileges were in a long-lost charter and that the 'usage is the only interpreter'.[25]

Not only were the origins of some corporations unclear, but so was there purpose. The Webbs have stated that providing a magistracy was the primary function of a corporation whereas Maitland argued that they were primarily landlords of property owned by the town.[26] During the eighteenth century, the responsibilities of Derby's corporation fluctuated as it acquired the role of market regulator when the Company of Mercers disappeared in the first half of the century, and it lost responsibilities to improvement commissions in the latter half.

The structures of corporations differed greatly but essentially, they were made up of a small governing elite and a body of freeman though there was not a regular format for determining the size, leaving the ruling elite able to determine the body's openness. This can be seen by comparing the structure of the corporations of Derby, Nottingham

[22] Jack Langton, 'Urban Growth and Economic Change: From late Seventeenth Century to 1841', in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, table 2, p. 466; Sweet, *English Town*, p. 33.
[23] Innes and Rogers, 'Politics and Government', p. 531.
[24] Sweet, *English Town*, pp. 34-5.
[25] *An Inquiry into the Right of Admitting Honorary Freemen (non-resident) to give their suffrages for Representatives in Parliament for the Borough of Derby by Juvenis*, 1778 (DLSL 4588 – 3.), pp. 10-11.
[26] Sweet, *English Town* p. 35; Keith-Lucas, *Unreformed Local Government System*, p. 28.

and Leicester. The Derby corporation consisted of a mayor, nine aldermen, 14 brethren, 14 capital burgesses, a town clerk (a local legal advisor) and a recorder (usually an established lawyer). In total there were 40 members of the inner circle drawn from the larger body of freemen, whose number increased from 655 in 1680 to 900 in 1791.[27] This means that only about 4-6% of the freemen were directly able to make decisions concerning corporation business. The inner circle was also able to maintain their number by the restricted way in which each tier of the body was elected. Each level of the corporation was filled by the members in the level below yet were elected by those above, so the capital burgesses became brethren if voted for by the mayor and current brethren, and brethren would become alderman if voted for by the mayor and current aldermen. The mayor was chosen by the aldermen from within their ranks, although it was traditional for the newest alderman to become mayor at the next opportunity.[28] Burgesses wishing to enter the inner body also had to serve as a constable and then as a chamberlain before being eligible to be elected as a member of the common council.[29] This system allowed each tier to 'close the gate behind' and therefore to restrict who entered their ranks.

The main governing body of Nottingham's corporation was even smaller than that at Derby. It consisted of a mayor, seven aldermen, and 18 senior councilmen. As at Derby, election to this body was severely limited. The mayor was one of the seven aldermen who themselves were chosen from the ranks of the senior councilmen. The councilmen were theoretically elected by the burgesses (3,000 by 1833) but it was rarely put to vote. Also, only those burgesses who had served as chamberlain or sheriff, and were therefore part of the livery (around 70 in 1833), were eligible for election and as those positions were granted solely by the mayor this further reduced their openness.[30] There was a smaller group, six in number, known as the junior councillors, who sat for life or until retirement and whom Thomis described as the 'democratic, popular element'. They were often elected in contested elections and served as the primary opposition to the main governing body as they were often representative of the burgesses rather than

[27] Stephen Glover, *Glover's Derby*, facsimile edition of 1849 publication (Derby: 1992), p. 7.
[28] Glover, *Glover's Derby*, p5.
[29] Jane Steer, 'Derby Borough Rental 1729: Part 1', in *Derbyshire Miscellany* (Vol 14: Part 2, Autumn 1995), p. 31.
[30] Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham*, p114.

the governing elite.[31] The corporation of Leicester, on the other hand, was different to both those of Nottingham and Derby as it had more official positions within the main governing body, suggesting openness, but has been seen as having been much more corrupt. It was made up of a mayor, 23 aldermen, and 49 common councilmen. It also had many more subsidiary positions such as two chamberlains, two bailiffs, a recorder, a town clerk, a town solicitor, two coroners, two fair stewards, and a treasurer. One of the bailiff positions was chosen by the Earl of Huntingdon (although whether this continued whilst the title was subsumed between 1789-1819 is unclear), and had a nominal existence, and the other bailiff, chosen by the corporation, had a salary of 50 guineas but delegated much of the work to the town clerk who served as the under bailiff. It was also unlikely in this period to find the councilmen at full strength leading to the damning verdict that Leicester's corporation was 'closed, irresponsible, and self-elected'.[32]

Derby's corporation can therefore be seen as more open with a larger inner circle than at Nottingham whilst it also did not leave multiple positions empty to ensure a political consensus as was the case at Leicester. The way that Georgian corporations were configured and organised, in which each stage of the hierarchy controlled admission to their own ranks, meant that they all became oligarchies to some extent. Much power was vested in the positions of the mayor, who could create burgesses and therefore control the political persuasion of the corporation and the town clerk who sat on various bodies due to the growing importance of legal advisors in urban governance.

Corporation Responsibilities

Although Georgian corporations were made up of multiple positions and levels of hierarchy, they were treated legally as a single body and this body was entrusted with several administrative duties to help run boroughs. Primarily it was the role of the corporation to manage land belonging to the burgesses, to regulate markets, protect and manage charitable bequests, and to hold courts lower down the legal process such as

[31] Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham*, p117.
[32] Figures given by Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester,* p. 21; Greaves, *Corporation of Leicester*, p. 5 and p. 8, suggests a pre-1684 body of 48 common councillors and 24 aldermen before changing to 24 and 36 before changing back in 1688.

petty sessions. Although they shared urban government with the parishes and, later in the eighteenth century, the improvement commissions, the Derby corporation exercised much power and influence, being responsible for the entirety of the town's urban footprint which was not always the case in eighteenth-century centres.[33] Corfield describes corporations as basing their authority 'upon tradition, custom, and the general acceptance of ancient rights' which were backed by royal authority giving them the ability to involve themselves in various aspects of urban life. Though how and when they could reasonably be expected to act has been debated.[34]

Historians have argued that the main role of corporations was the management of corporate property, at least until they merged with guilds and courts and gained further responsibilities.[35] Property rights were 'considered the basis of society' so corporations were thought of 'in their role as property owners, just as much as in their executive or judicial role' with the rent from the land, and the profit from selling it, being the main sources of corporate income.[36] Derby's corporation had benefitted from being granted land recovered under Queen Mary that had been confiscated from the monasteries and religious houses in the town during the Reformation. By 1729, this land was yielding £500 per annum.[37] The management and distribution of corporate property often caused disputes, especially when it appeared to conflict with the rights of the burgesses such as the enclosure of commons, which will be discussed in a later chapter. Outside the obligations of charitable grants, which stipulated how land rents could be used, corporations were allowed to 'apply the produce of their estates in any manner they pleased'. This was legally confirmed in a ruling of the King's Bench in 1809 when Derby's corporation defended themselves in court regarding their generation of profit on corporate land to cover their expenses.[38] A report from the charity commissioners at the end of this period also showed that the corporation were willing to trade land to maximise the rents that were gleaned from them. This had been highlighted in a court

[33] Frédéric Moret, *The End of the Urban Ancient Regime in England* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: 2015), pp. 88-91.
[34] Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, p. 153.
[35] Girouard, *The English Town*, p88; Frederic W. Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge: 1964), pp. 13-4.
[36] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 35; Girouard, *The English Town*, p. 88.
[37] Steer, 'Derby Borough Rental 1729: Part 1', p. 31.
[38] *Leicester Journal*, 1 February 1822 cited in Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p. 143; Edward Hyde East, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Court of King's Bench*, Vol 11 (London: 1810), pp. 168-176.

case in 1778 when the corporation were charged by the burgesses for the misuse of charity land where the main charge was that they had sold land for which they were merely trustees, rather than owners. This charge was dismissed.[39]

Another major source of income for the Derby corporation were the fines and tolls related to holding markets in the borough. It was a privilege of the mayor, granted by the town charter, to decide and receive tolls for those bringing goods to markets and fairs thus allowing him to dictate who could and could not trade within the town, a responsibility gained since the decline of the Company of Mercers in the 1730s which is discussed in chapter five. There were two ways in which the mayor could use this power to the financial advantage of the corporation: through charging non-resident traders to trade on market days or by allowing them to buy freeman status in the borough which allowed them to hold permanent trading premises.[40] The corporation could also force traders out of their trades if they were thought to have an adverse impact upon the local economy. Rosen's study of early modern Winchester has noted that market exclusion cases were brought primarily against those in established trades rather than new ones, whereas Reed, focussing on Ipswich in the same period, found that legal actions against foreign traders were most likely to be motivated by 'personal rivalries and jealousies than by an altruistic concern for the ancient liberties of a town.'[41] Although the loss of the corporation papers means that we cannot be sure this happened in Derby, it is likely they showed a firm hand in governing the town's trade, as the Company of Mercers did before them. Derby's corporation was empowered to organise petty session courts for the sole purpose of trying trades for the violation of tolls and as the mayor and the four leading aldermen were Justices of the Peace, they could be pretty certain of a successful result.[42]

The corporation also received substantial fees from creating freemen, especially around elections, and as property owners, but there was always a shortfall which prevented them from engaging in improving the town, a common source of complaint against

[39] *Derby Mercury,* 6th March 1778.
[40] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 100.
[41] Adrienne Rosen, 'Winchester in Transition, 1580-1700', in Clark (ed.), *County Towns in Pre-Industrial Britain* (Leicester: 1981), p. 176; Michael Reed, 'Economic Structure and Change in Seventeenth-century Ipswich', in Clark (ed.), *County Towns*, p. 121.
[42] Glover, *Glover's Derby*, p. 5; Elliott*, The Derby Philosophers*, p. 87; John Houghton, *Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* (Vol 2, Number 41, May 12th 1693).

corporations. When the idea of an improvement commission was floated in 1792 much opposition focussed on the idea that improvements were the responsibility of the corporation. The fact that corporations had a penchant for extravagant display at election times and during public celebrations, reinforced the idea that they were wealthy organisations. Borsay has argued that this is why corporations tend to be regarded as having been corrupt, although in reality, what might appear to be excessive spending for private pleasure could actually have been a 'highly astute form of investment, designed to attract wealthy visitors'.[43] Sweet has emphasised that when boroughs were incorporated, the idea of wide-scale improvement would not have been imaginable, so within the town charters there were restrictions on how much income a corporation could generate such as through stipulations on how much property a body could own.[44] Leicester's corporation, for example, had a debt over £20,000 by 1835 whilst Derby's corporate debt was around £3605 in June 1823 though by December this became a surplus of £118, with the average for this period 1811-31 being between £500-£1,000 in hand.[45] Corporate finances were therefore volatile, which meant that their ability to invest in public works was limited.

Social Structure of the Derby Corporation Elite

Clark has argued that the notion of 'oligarchy' in relation to local Georgian urban hierarchies is a concept that needs to be treated critically.[46] This section will examine the main ruling group of the corporation in Derby as well as the wider body of freemen to determine how open or closed the corporation was and how much it represented a local oligarchy. More oligarchic did not necessarily mean more gentrified but 'only the success of a faction' and this was the case in Derby where the top levels of the corporation were somewhat 'open' in social terms, where aligning with the wishes of the Cavendish family appears to have been the main entry criteria.[47]

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[43] Peter Borsay, 'Introduction', in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (New York: 1995), p. 23.
[44] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 55.
[45] Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp. 139-40; *Mr Thomas Crayne for the Corporation of Derby in account with Crompton, Newton & co, 1811-1831* (DLSL 9503MSS).
[46]Jonathan Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge: 1986), pp. 38-9.
[47] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 196.

Local urban politics has been likened to a battlefield as 'individuals and interest groups jockeyed for influence and power' but at the same time there was still a combined effort to present an 'outward show of unity'.[48] Society was divided by politics, class, and religion and English corporations often leant heavily to a particular group amongst these divisions. Whilst most towns across England and Wales tended to have rich Whigs in residence but corporations led or dominated by Tory interests, Derby did not follow this trend due to having a Whig-led corporation, a predominantly, though by no means complete, Whig financial elite, and a large body of Tory voting burgesses.[49] It is only in class divisions where it is difficult to generalise on the social make-up of corporations as it depended on the town's function, how contested the electoral seats were, and the proximity to the country seats of the nobility. A recent study of Toryism in Derbyshire has shown that Derby was also in the minority of boroughs in that it had wage labourers largely supporting Tory candidates.[50]

Derby's corporation was dominated by several leading families from which multiple generations often served side by side during the long eighteenth century. Between 1735-1834, only 36 families supplied mayors, with 22 families providing mayors that served more than once. The Cromptons, dissenting Whigs, held the mayoral office 11 times in this period whilst the Hopes, who were high church Tories, held it 10 times. The Bagnolds, Gisbornes, Franceys and Hopes could all trace their interest in the office back to the seventeenth century and earlier.[51] Not only did all these families dominate the office of the mayor, but they were also present in the rest of the corporate body where family members sat together on the alderman bench as part of the urban elite. Although some towns attempted to curb the degree which a small group of families might hold too many corporate offices, like Scarborough where no more than three members of the same family could serve at any one time, it remained common.[52] At

[48] Borsay, 'Introduction', in Borsay, *The Eighteenth Century Town*, p. 24.
[49] Leeds had a Tory, Anglican Corporation with Whig Dissenters on Improvement commissions see Robert J. Morris, 'Civil Society and the Nature of Urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850', in *Urban* History, 25:3 (December 1998), p. 296; Bristol, Coventry, Nottingham, Westminster, Exeter, Leicester, Worcester, Chester, Monmouth and Newcastle upon Tyne all had Tory-controlled corporations according to Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History*, *1688-1832*, 2nd ed. (London: 2016), p. 95. Girouard, *English Town*, p. 88; Maxwell Craven, *An Illustrated History of Derby* (Derby: 2007), p. 156.
[50] Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics'*, pp. 15, 32 and 42.
[51] Craven, *An Illustrated History of Derby*, p. 159.
[52] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 122.

Nottingham, the Municipal Corporation Report commissioners found that three quarters of the corporation was made up of only four families in 1835 whilst at Derby 15 of the 34 corporation members were related.[53]

Derby's corporation was socially oligarchic as well as politically, but this seeming political stability was not as guaranteed as it may first appear. The poll books printed after elections often recorded the trade of voters including aldermen. The brethren and common councillors are not listed as such but as their trade is left blank, and they are listed with those who either were aldermen at the time of election or became aldermen later in the period, we can assume that the corporation went *en masse* to the polling booth on the first day of the election (apart from the 1748 election when a political split in the corporation stopped this temporarily).[54] This has been recorded in other boroughs too such as Leicester where on the final day of the 1768 election, seven aldermen and 21 common councillors voted as a group and was a common part of elections in other parts of the country too.[55] Of the three polls analysed in this period for which printed poll books survive showing a straight battle between Tory and Whig candidates (1710, 1741, and 1775), and of the 50 aldermen identified through the *Derby Mercury* as having served in the eighteenth century, only two ever voted Tory. Henry Franceys (1692-1748) voted Tory in the 1710 election, became alderman in 1733, and then voted Whig in 1741. Only Isaac Borrow (1673-1745) voted Tory whilst serving as an alderman, which he did in 1741. As the brethren and common councillors were not named as such in poll books it is difficult to determine their political opinion, but tentative judgements can be made. In 1741, the first 34 names listed all appear to be connected with the corporation at some point in the century and are grouped into two (see table 1).

[53] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 122: Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham*, p. 116: Cockburn and Rushton, *Municipal Corporations in England*, p. 1850.
[54] *1748 Derby Poll Book* (DLSL BA324)
[55] Greaves, *Corporation of Leicester*, p. 104; Harry T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: 1995), p. 46.

Name and dates (where known)	Trade (as given)	Lord Duncannon (Whig)	German Pole (Tory)
Samuel Fox, Esq.	Mayor	1	
Mr [Joshua] Smith [c.1686-1773]	Alderman	2	
Mr John Gisborne [c.1665-1762]	Alderman	3	
Mr [Nathaniel] Edwards [d.1745]	Alderman	4	
Mr Thomas Gisborne [c.1679-1760]	Alderman	5	
Mr [Samuel] Cooper [d. 1746]	Alderman	6	
Lord Charles Cavendish [1704-1783]		7	
Samuel Dakin, esq.		8	
Thomas Yates	Gentleman	9	
Thomas Coke, esq. [1700-1776]		10	
Samuel Sanders, esq. [d. 1746]		11	
Mr Cockayne	Reverend	12	
Richard Bagshaw jun, esq. [d. 1776]		13	
Sir Robert Wilmot [1709-1772]		14	
Henry Coape, esq. [1704-1778]		15	
Mr Harris	Reverend	16	
Mr John Girling		17	
Mr Samuel Fox jun. [d. 1755]		18	
Mr William Bateman [d. 1756]	Town Clerk	19	
Samuel Crompton Elder, esq. [1677-1757]		20	
Hugh Bateman esq [c.1689-1777]		21	
Mr Samuel Crompton jun [1714-1782]		22	
Mr John Philipps		23	
Mr Joseph Bateman, jun [d. 1753]		24	
Mr Richard Whitby [c. 1720-1783]		25	
Mr Benjamin Blyth [d. 1758]		26	
Mr Joseph Bingham [1698-1780]		27	
Mr Gilbert Fox [c.1711-1782]		28	
Abe Ward sen		29	
Mr [Isaac] Borrow [1673-1745]	Alderman		1
Thomas Borrow, esq [1709-1786]	Recorder		2
John Borrow, esq. [1702-1780]			3
Gilbert Cheshire jun [d. 1763]	gentleman		4
Mr Abe Ward			5

Table 1: First 34 names to appear in the poll book for the 1741 Derby borough election[56]

The first group of 29 names voted for the Whig candidate and included the mayor, five aldermen, the town clerk, and several rural gentry such as Lord Charles Cavendish (1704-1783) and Robert Wilmot (1708-1772), 1st Baronet of Osmaston and the private secretary to William Cavendish (1698-1755), 3rd Duke of Devonshire. The second group included only five names including the aforementioned alderman Borrow and his two sons John (1702-1780) and Thomas (1709-1786), plus members of the Ward and Cheshire families who all voted for the Tory candidate. The 1775 poll book is similar in that the first 23 names include seven aldermen, the mayor, and five future aldermen. Of those first names that can be seen as connected to the corporation, only one, John

[56] *1741 Derby Poll Book* (DLSL BA324)

Bingham (d. 1819) never became an alderman, and he voted for the Tory candidate. If these groups of names who headed the poll books constituted the main body of the corporation, which is likely, then it was heavily Whig but not exclusively. The 1775 election was the last contested borough election before the Reform Bill of 1832 so unfortunately, we cannot carry this analysis further through the political upheavals of the late-eighteenth century to see if this trend continued.[57]

It was not just party politics that required attention from the corporation to prevent a split amongst their number. In 1747 and 1748, the corporation of Derby experienced two crises that split allegiances amongst the aldermen. What is most interesting it that the split was not between Whigs and Tories, but between those who wished to accept the Duke's interest and those who did not. The first of the two crises also represents the only evidence that the religious make-up of the corporation was causing issues. The story of the events surrounding the death of two aldermen in 1747 and the borough election of 1748 is detailed in letters sent to the 3rd Duke of Devonshire and other interested parties from members of the corporation, asking for guidance, to keep them abreast of the situation or, most notably, reassure the Duke of the respect held for him by the signees.

The problem began in April 1747 when two aldermen, Robert Wagstaffe (1662?-1747) and Robert Hague (d. 1747), died. A letter signed by six of the remaining aldermen was quickly sent to the Duke informing him that an issue had arisen during the election of the two replacement aldermen. The eight remaining aldermen met at the George Inn, as was customary, to replace Wagstaffe and Hague. Six of them voted according to their 'affection to the Government' and 'his Grace's [the Duke of Devonshire] interest', for John Noton (d. 1756) and Joseph Bingham (1698-1780). The two remaining aldermen had voted for Benjamin Granger (1674-1761) and Matthew How (d. 1763). Granger and How, feeling aggrieved at being overlooked, ordered a meeting of the brethren and common council in order to choose the replacements within their groups and they too sent a letter to the Duke. The Granger-How letter ends with the signatory claiming they had 'for some time past Observed a design to divide the interest' and which now was turned against 'his Grace's interest'.[58] This evidence therefore highlights that the

[58] *Letter from Derby Corporation to Duke of Devonshire*, 4th April 1747 (CHA CS1/105.1).

political divisions found even in the highest benches of Derby's corporation thus undermining any notions of a peaceful oligarchy.

Thomas Gisborne (c.1679-1760) in a letter to Sir Robert Wilmot, 1st Baronet of Osmaston, described the same proceedings from the opposite side of the argument to the six alderman who signed the above letter. For this faction, the issue concerned the religious balance of the aldermanic bench. Gisborne reported that on the death of Wagstaffe and Hague, the 'Desenters' [sic] spotted an opportunity and voted for John Noton, 'an old Dissenter' and Joseph Bingham, 'another Dissenter' out of 14 brethren of whom Noton was the seventh youngest and Bingham the youngest. This caused, according to Gisborne, the senior brethren and the common council to be in great disorder so much so that 'they came in a great Body' to him and showed 'that the Hall was to be filled up with Desenters' leaving 20 of their 'friends behind that are not Desenters'. Gisborne also claimed that a Mr Sanders, Mr Woolley and three county JPs, all dissenters, had plagued the previous Duke with 'strange designs & ill conduct towards his family'.[59]

The events of 1747 are particularly notable as they constitute the only reference to religious splits within the corporation that has come to light and highlights that Derby's corporation was not always politically or socially united. Most importantly for the rest of this chapter is the reference to the Duke's interest. It shows that the corporation was constantly conscious of the influence of the Duke but that his interest could split the corporation regardless of the political standing of the candidates. At the end of 1748 these divisions reappeared. On the death of John Stanhope (b. 1705-1748) in December of 1748, there was a vacancy for an MP for the borough. On the sixth of that month, the corporation sent a letter to the 3rd Duke of Devonshire assuring him that they 'shall do [their] utmost to serve the interest desired for the Gentleman recommended'. The recommendation came solely from the Duke, and the corporation confirmed their support for the Duke's man even before he had been chosen. Six days later, on the twelfth, another letter was sent to the Duke, which contained ill news for his cause.

[59] *Letter from Thomas Gisborne to Sir Robert Wilmot*, 8th April 1747 (CHA CS1/319.4). 'Mr Sanders' may refer to Samuel Sanders esq., a barrister who had died in 1746 (*Derby Mercury,* 21st November 1746) and 'Mr Woolley' may refer to John Woolley esq., who may have died in 1748 as his estate was for sale on 23rd December of that year (*Derby Mercury*, 23rd December 1748).

> My Lord, we are very sorry to trouble you with this. On receiving your Grace's letter acquainting us with the Death of Mr John Stanhope, Mr [Matthew] How (the present mayor) desired a meeting of the corporation & we then thought we had been unanimous in supporting Capt Tho[mas] Stanhope's [c.1718-1770] interest according to your Graces desire & Mr Paschall, Mr [Thomas] Rivett [1713-1763] answered for both Mr Rivetts. This night Mr Stanhope came to Derby & soon after Mr Tho Rivett declared himself candidate which has broken into your Grace's interest by taking off Messrs [John] Bloodworth [d. 1771], [Benjamin] Blyth [d. 1758], [Thomas] Stamford jun [1712-1787], & several others. We shall need the assistance of all the out voters and are afraid the Election will be very Precarious & also Expensive.'[60]

This correspondence therefore shows that divisions within the corporation affected wider electoral politics and, perhaps surprisingly, were not simply between Whig and Tory. The alderman bench had been split not by party affiliation but by the question of who would follow, and who would reject, the Duke's interest with three aldermen voting for Rivett and five (plus the Mayor) voting for Stanhope and one alderman abstaining.[61] To Thomas Rivett's side came the usual Tory families and candidates who were willing to support a Whig if it meant denting the Duke's influence in the borough. A letter from Thomas Gisborne and Samuel Crompton I (1677-1757) to the Duke on the 13th of December reported that Captain Stanhope was trailing by 150 votes in a preliminary canvas. Gisborne attributed Rivett's success to the fact Rivett had been pretending to be supported by the Duke whilst canvassing for votes. The Duke's interest appears therefore to be as important to voters as it was for the corporate body. A final letter sent on the 21st by Thomas Gisborne to the Duke reported that Stanhope had lost to Rivett by a majority of 70, and that the 'Whig interest was broak up' [sic].[62] As evidence of corporation meetings are lacking, and there was no borough election between 1748 and 1775, there is no way of knowing the aftermath of these events but it was very rare to have an electoral contest between members of this same party in this

[60] *Letter from certain members of Derby Corporation to the Duke of Devonshire*, 6th December 1748 (CHA CS1/105.2b).
[61] *1748 Derby Poll Book* (DLSL BA324)
[62] *Letter from Thomas Gisborne and Samuel Crompton Jun. to the Duke of Devonshire*, 13th December 1748 (CHA CS1/105.5); *Letter from Thomas Gisborne to the Duke of Devonshire*, 21st December 1748 (CHA CS1/319.7).

period.[63] Thomas Bennet (c.1695-1770), manager of a Silk Mill in Derby (previously Lombe's), does mention in a letter to his employers that the election of Rivett did not raise any resentments and that the 'Inhabitants of the Town in general have greater harmony among them, than was ever known'.[64]

Although the system of internal promotion limited the voting pools for electing members for each level of the corporate body, there were not many restrictions on who could enter, provided they passed each stage of the process. To reach the top of the corporation individuals had first to become burgesses via apprenticeship, birth, gift or purchase, then become a constable, then a chamberlain, and finally a member of the common council. From there they had to be elected as brethren, then as an alderman and finally they would be chosen as mayor. Table 2 uses information pieced together from the *Derby Mercury* and various poll books to show, where able, who served as an alderman during the period covered by this thesis, when they served, and their trade.

Name and Dates (where available)	**Date became Alderman**	**Mayor in…**	**Trade**
Thomas Carter	By 1698	1698 and 1701	
John Brookhouse	By 1677	1677	
William Franceys (1650-1724)	By 1697	1697, 1699 and 1700	
Joseph Bloodworth	By 1702	1702	
Mr Ralph	By 1701	-	
Marshall	By 1701	-	
Beachcroft	By 1710	-	
William Turner (d. 1716)	By 1704	1704	
Thomas Bott (1646-1732)	By 1705	1705	Mercer
Joseph Broughton	By 1706	1706 and 1713	
Thomas Byram	By 1707	1707	
Thomas Fisher	By 1709	1709 and 1714	
Richard Ward	By 1710	1710 and 1719	
Thomas Rivett (1679-1724)	By 1715	1715	
John Bagnold Thomas	By 1716	1716	
Thomas Geary	By 1717	1717	
Hugh Bateman	By 1720	1720	
William Woolley (d. 1732)	By 1722	1722	
Philip Parr	By 1723	1723	
Thomas Houghton (d. 1733)	By 1727	1727	
Henry Franceys (1692-1748)	Sept 1733	1747	Apothecary
John Bagnold (1672-1738)	by 1726	1726 and 1736	Groom of his majesty's wood yard
Francis Cokayne (c. 1651-1739)	by 1703	1703, 1711, 1721 and 1733	Mercer
Joshua Smith (c. 1686-1773)	Dec 1739	1739, 1740 and 1762	Apothecary

[63] Dickinson, *Politics of the People*, p. 51.
[64] *Letter from Thomas Bennet to LW & Co,* 9th January 1749. The letters of Thomas Bennet are taken from *Letter Copy Book; Records Correspondences sent by Thomas Bennet, manager of the Derby Silk Mill to Messrs William Wilson and Samuel Lloyd. 1746-1749* (DBYMU 1992-134). I am grateful to the staff of Derby Museums for providing me with a transcript of the letters.

John Holmes (d. 1740)	by 1708	1708, 1718 and 1732	Taylor
Samuel Fox (d. 1755)	July 1740	1741	Soap Boyler
Samuel Cooper (d. 1746)	By 1725	1725, 1735 and 1744	
John Bingham (c. 1693-1773)	Mar 1746	1757	Mercer
Nathaniel Edwards (d. 1745)	by 1731	1731	Physic
Isaac Borrow (1673-1745)	by 1730	1730 and 1742	
Robert Wagstaffe (c.1662-1747)	by 1728	1728 and 1738	
Robert Hague (d. 1747)	Jul 1745	1745	Maltster?
John Noton (d. 1756)	Apr 1747	-	Hosier
Joseph Bingham (1698-1780)	Apr 1747	1750 and 1760	
Matthew How (d. 1763)	Feb 1748	1748 and 1753	George Inn and postmaster
Robert Bakewell (c. 1688-1765)	1738	1739, 1751, 1754, 1756 and 1759	
William Evans (d. 1773)	Aug 1755	1755, 1765 and 1768	Cornfactor
Humphrey Booth (d. 1755)	July 1745	1746, 1747 and 1752	Mercer
Benjamin Granger (1674-1761)	Jan 1756	-	
Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782)	Aug 1756	1758, 1767 and 1777	Banker
Thomas Gisborne (c.1679-1760)	by 1712	1712, 1724, 1734, 1743 and 1749	
Thomas Rivett (1713-1763)	Jan 1761	1761	
Thomas Milnes (c. 1699-1762)	Nov 1761	1762	Grocer
John Gisborne (c. 1665-1762)	by 1729	1729 and 1737	JP
Thomas Eaton (c. 1713-1793)	Oct 1762	1771	Stockiner
John Heath (1709-1786)	Dec 1762	1763 and 1772	Clerk to
Samuel Wilde (d. 1778)	Jan 1763	1764 and 1766	Mercer
Thomas Stamford (1712-1785)	May 1768	1769	Hosier
Henry Flint (d. 1776)	July 1770	1770	Mercer and Draper
Thomas Bennet (c. 1895-1770)	Aug 1773	-	Resigned 1773, Silk
William Edwards (c. 1726-1800	Sep 1773	1773, 1780, 1785 and 1798	
Christopher Heath (1718-1815)	Aug 1774	1774	Resigned 1791, Banker
Robert Hope (d. 1777)	Mar 1775	1775 and 1777	
William Leaper (d. 1780)	May 1776	1776	
Francis Ashby esq (c. 1700-1795)	Dec 1777	1778 and 1784	
Matthew How	Sep 1778	1779	
Samuel Crompton III (1750-1810)	Aug 1780	1782 and 1788	
John Hope (c. 1730-1819)	May 1781	1781, 1787, 1795 and 1804	Gent
Benjamin Oldknow	May 1781	-	
Thomas Mather (c. 1734-1798)	Apr 1781	1783	Grocer
Henry Flint (c. 1792)	Feb 1786	1786	
Thomas Lowe	Aug 1791	1801, 1813 and 1822	
John Crompton (1753-1834)	July 1792	1800, 1810 and 1817	
William Snowden	Aug 1792	1793 and 1803	Grocer
William Stretton	Apr 1793	-	
Richard Leaper (1759-1738)	Dec 1793	1794, 1807, 1815 and 1824	
John Leaper Newton (1754-1819)	1796	1796	Town Clerk,
Charles Stead Hope (1763-1841)	Aug 1797	1806, 1816 and 1830	Reverend
Henry Brown (c. 1759-1831)	Jan 1799	1799 and 1808	

Table 2: List of alderman of Derby corporation who served during the eighteenth century.[65]

The fact that some Tories, such as the Hopes, did become mayor demonstrates that they were not politically excluded. In eighteenth-century Derby stockingers, bankers, hosiers, grocers, mercers, and innkeepers all served as aldermen. Corporation factions,

[65] Sources used were poll books for borough elections of 1710, 1741, and 1775 (DLSL BA324), The *Derby Postman* which ran 1720-1728 and the *Derby Mercury* which started in 1732 and ran throughout the period covered by this thesis.

of course, generally sought to claim to represent the interest of the Duke of Devonshire, which usually tried to maintain peace within the corporation and the burgesses as a whole.

Public Political Ritual and Ceremony

Derby's corporation in the eighteenth century used urban geography and ritual to provide affirmation of their heightened social position but it also gave the wider number of burgesses and town residents the chance to participate in local politics. Aside from its democratic function there were other benefits to the elaborate displays which celebrated the existence of corporations such as 'establishing their status, rewarding the services of unpaid members, and buttering up any person who could be useful to them.'[66] This element of urban politics often became a source of contention to those critical of corporate financial planning but expenditure on entertainment added colour to town life and the pomp and circumstance provided a focus for urban identity.[67] Corporate ritual and celebration was therefore a direct link between politics, the urban space and the people.

The Derby corporation was based at the Town Hall in the marketplace and it is here that most of the town's political events and rituals occurred with corporation members taking a pivotal role. This was most evident in mayoral elections which were a yearly occurrence at Michaelmas. The general process, practiced around England, involved the 'toing and froing between inner and outer rooms in the Town Hall, and processions between civic and religious buildings' with the focus being on the visibility of the 'pseudo-democratic element' of corporate politics.[68] In Derby, a proclamation was made on the steps of the Town Hall before a procession led to All Saints' Church, the religious centre of the town for which the corporation was patron, where a divine service was held followed by entertainment at the George Inn, Derby's premier inn.[69] A report in the *Derby Postman* in 1728 offers the most complete report of proceedings:

[66] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 25.
[67] Innes and Rogers, 'Politics and Government', p. 531.
[68] Peter Borsay, ''All the town's a stage': Urban Ritual and Ceremony', in Clark (ed.), *Transformation of English Provincial Towns*, p. 240.
[69] *Derby Mercury,* 4th Oct 1771 amongst many other examples.

> 'Sunday last being the feast of St Michael, Robert Wagstaffe, Gent. was chose Mayor of this Corporation, at the Parish Church of All Saints for the year ensuing. The ceremony being over, he was accompanied by the Magistrates in their Formalities to the Cross in the market-place, where he was proclaimed according to Custom; and universal rejoycings [sic] were seen to appear in all the Countenances of the Spectators, being a Gentleman everyway qualified for the Government of that high and honourable office.'[70]

Fairs provided another opportunity for corporations to provide pomp and ceremony which underlined the value they had for the urban economy and their own income. In 1733, the main body of the corporation, led by the mayor, met in the marketplace and 'publickly [sic] proclaimed the said Fair, with the usual Ceremonies: from thence they proceeded to Nuns-Green, preceded by the Mace-Bearer with the Mace, and Musick playing all the Way, where the same was repeated'.[71] The marketplace, therefore, did not simply possess commercial importance and purpose but was also the centre of town celebration. Physical changes made to marketplaces in this period also increased control, civic reputation and displayed wealth and power' such as at Nottingham and Leicester whose marketplaces had been fairly rural looking in the seventeenth century but had been 'improved' to 'feel more like a civic space'.[72]

Yearly, on the King's birthday, Derby celebrated with the ring of bells, entertainment at the principal inns, and bonfires in the marketplace around which barrels of ale were placed for the populace. If troops were stationed in the town, they formed up in the marketplace and fired volleys. One-off events were also observed in similar fashion such as military victories, the hundredth anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, coronations and the return to good health of George III in 1789, the celebration of which lasted three days. This was likely due the unofficial outburst of celebration that would be followed the next day by a more carefully conducted official celebration.[73] Again, the celebrations centred on the marketplace in front of the Town Hall with food, music, drink, and

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[70] *Derby Postman,* 3rd Oct 1728.
[71] *Derby Mercury,* 20th Sept 1733.
[72] Dave Postles, 'The Market Place as Space in Early Modern England', in *Social* History (29:1, February 2004), p. 41; Emma Griffin, 'The "Urban Renaissance" and the Mob: Rethinking civic Improvement over the Long Eighteenth Century', in David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (eds.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: 2011), pp. 61 and 64.
[73] John Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns 1660-1722* (Oxford: 2007), p. 98.

entertainment being provided for the masses whilst the corporation, after starting the festivities in the square, would retire to the George Inn.[74] One celebration, for the taking of New York in 1776 during the American Revolution, was only reported by the Tory, and short lived, *Harrison's Derby Journal* and not the then Whig-leaning *Derby Mercury*. Urban ritual and celebrations were a political affair either through reinforcing the position of the corporation or by linking the town with wider national events whilst also recreating and consolidating 'both political and social loyalties through the transmission of ideology and munificence'.[75] This politicisation of the urban space was no more evident than during elections, to which this chapter turns.

Borough and County Elections in Derby

At the start of the eighteenth century, the country gentry became more interested in urban politics as the position of MP held greater power in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution.[76] The influence exerted on Derby by local noble families, as described in chapter one, was most evident at election time. Eighteenth-century elections in Derby, as elsewhere, were characterised by corruption, violence, vote rigging, and bribery as the burgesses of the town, all of whom had the right to vote, became important political figures. It has usually been asserted that the choice of Derby MPs was largely determined by agreement between the corporation and the Cavendish family with the Cavendishes choosing one seat, and the corporation the other. As the majority of the alderman supported the Cavendish interest, the family could usually rely on the second borough seat too. However, the Cavendish family, their agents, and the corporation could not take this for granted as it was only a custom, rather than a legal obligation, and they had to pay constant attention to the borough to ensure that they had support. However, despite these efforts, there were still bitterly contested elections with much evidence of interference.[77]

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[74] *Derby Mercury,* 25th Sep 1761, amongst others such as celebrations for Culloden (1746), Peace in 1749, Quebec (1759), Brest (1759), Peace in 1763, the release of John Wilkes (1770), Anniversary of Glorious Revolution (1788), Return of Kings Health (1789), General Thanksgiving for late military victories (1797).
[75] Nicholas Rogers, 'Crowds and Political Festivals in Georgian England', in Harris, *Politics of the Excluded,* p. 239.
[76] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford: 1991), p. 223.
[77] C. E. Hogarth, 'The Parliamentary Elections of 1832' in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 89, 1969), p. 70.

Each Derby election followed a similar format. The candidates put themselves forward via announcements in the newspaper, they appealed to voters and tried to gain an idea of the level of support they had in the town, and then a meeting of the urban elite decided on winner based on the political 'sense of the town' and support within the elite. Arguments concerning an obvious political control therefore started to falter as the opinion of voters was as important in non-contested elections as they were in contested elections with candidates canvassing the town to discover voter opinion. The lengths to which candidates went to gain approval from the populace shows how essential this process was for electoral success. Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) wrote in 1781, a year after he moved to Radbourne near Derby, that 'mankind will not be served without being first pleased or tickled. They take the present pleasure of getting drunk with their candidate, as an earnest proof, that he will contribute to their future good.'[78] In 1746, Sir Henry Harpur (1708-1748), the fifth Baronet, hoped to be elected for the borough and spent a vast sum of money in many inns and taverns in the town to please the burgesses. Candidates were also sure to include their poorer supporters in post-election celebrations by either inviting them to dine at a tavern or by giving them a cash substitute.[79]

A contested election was also an opportunity for wider members of a candidate's family to be politically active, including women, whose involvement has been linked to the 'century's fiercest election battles.'[80] Female family members were expected to complement the work of their menfolk through judicious socialising and 'acts of charity, pardons for the unjustly accused, and patronage for the deserving.'[81] When John Gisborne, a candidate for the fifth Duke of Devonshire who was not one to engage himself in politics, was up for election in 1775, the Duke's wife, Georgiana (1757-1806) took on the canvas on his behalf.[82] In a letter to her mother, Lady Georgiana Spencer (1737-1814), in October 1774, Georgiana wrote that at one assembly, 'nobody was

[78] Desmond King-Hele (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin* (Cambridge: 2007), 81-3 to Thomas Day, 16 May 1781, p. 184.
[79] This tactic was employed by Lord James Cavendish *Derby Mercury,* 14th May 1741, John Stanhope, esq *Derby Mercury,* 11th March 1748, by Lord George Cavendish and Thomas Rivett *Derby Mercury,* 3rd April 1761.
[80] Chalus, 'Women and Electoral Politics', p. 154.
[81] Chalus, 'Women and Electoral Politics', p. 156.
[82] Amanda Foreman, 'Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and the Whig Party', in Barker and Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 181.

refus'd at the door, the ballroom was quite full of the daughters and wives of all the voters'.[83] 'Judicious socializing' by family members all contributed to a family's political credit and was expected of them, as shown by a letter to Georgiana from her mother chastising her for not dancing with enough Derbyshire voters during the run up to the election of 1784.[84] References in the *Derby Mercury* to electoral canvassing are relatively thin, only commenting on who was in town rather than what they were doing. This suggests that canvassing was more suited for the urban elite, as will be shown below.

Borough elections were open only to those with a right to vote who, in Derby, had to be freemen of the corporation which therefore gave corporation members the chance to control elections by controlling the freemen. Sweet has argued that the actions of corporations during elections drew the most accusations of corruption.[85] Freemen were required to visit the Town Hall in the run up to the election to prove their right to vote. On polling day, they returned to the Town Hall to cast their vote with their name and chosen candidate entered into a poll book which was then published. That is not to say that those who weren't freemen simply ignored elections as evidence has emerged showing how every resident of a borough could be swept up by events. The rituals that occurred during elections, of processions, treating, and pronouncements, 'delivered certain messages *to the entire community,* not merely to the electors' and were designed to attain 'maximum popular participation'.[86] The 'work-people' of Bennet's silk mill in Derby, for example, had been unsettled by the borough election of 1748 but that 'it was over on Tuesday last and our people settled to Business again on Wednesday'. [87]

There were, however, limits to the influence that could be exerted upon the community. Granting food and drink immediately before or after an election was not always effective unless combined with sustained activities. Giving money to the amenities of

[83] Earl of Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana: Extracts from correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, (London: 1955), Letter from the Duchess to her Mother, Lady Spencer, 9th October 1774, p. 16.
[84] Chalus, 'Women and Electoral Politics', p156 and Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c.1754-90* (Oxford: 2005), p. 198.
[85] Rosemary Sweet, 'Corrupt and Corporate Britain: Attitudes to Corruption in Eighteenth-Century and Early Nineteenth-Century Towns', in James R. Moore and John Smith (eds.), *Corruption in Urban Politics and Society, Britain 1780-1950* (Aldershot: 2007), p. 44.
[86] Frank O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780-1860', in *Past & Present* (No 135, May 1992), p. 81.
[87] *Letter from Thomas Bennett to LW & Co,* 26th December 1748 (DBYMU 1992-134)

the town as well as its 'civic fabric and identity' were also essential considerations of electoral candidates.[88] Elections were important because they provided a 'periodic opportunity for a public check and report on the assiduousness of the local elite in fulfilling its responsibilities' whilst allowing an 'opportunity for the neglected to complain and for the grateful to repay a kindness.' [89] When Sir Henry Harpur returned to the borough for an election after the unsuccessful 1746 bid, it was noted that he had done nothing to regain the vote from his supporters who had not heard from him in that time.[90] Regarding the 1748 election discussed above, Thomas Bennett felt that Stanhope had lost because he was a 'Gentleman unknown in this Country' whereas Rivett was a 'Townsman' and one who was 'Greatly esteem'd by everyone, nay even his Opponents in the Election'.[91] Elections were one of the main occasions when aristocrats and rural nobility visited the town, and it could be guaranteed the members of the Cavendish family would be present. They would often dine with the corporation, gentry supporters, and then the burgesses and, if voters lived outside the borough, it was their responsibility, as it was for all electoral candidates, to organise their travel, food, and lodgings.[92]

It is important to note these seemingly straight forward steps, as Derby borough elections were sometimes criticised for sharp practices during this process. Some overly manipulative practices were reactionary and were based around stopping opposition supporters from voting and some were well laid plans using the significant influence of the Duke of Devonshire to inform the result. One way in which the Cavendish family and their agents sought to control the results of elections was to create honorary burgesses which has often been seen – and was certainly regarded later – as a corrupt practice but it became quite a normal practice in Derby's eighteenth-century elections. It involved the corporation creating burgesses who would vote for the Duke's candidate, thus ensuring victory in tight elections. As mentioned previously, poll books show the order

[88] Peter Borsay, 'The Landed Elite and Provincial Towns in Britain 1660-1800', in *The Georgian Group Journal* (Vol. 13, 2003), p. 285; Mark Girouard, 'The Country House and the Country Town', in *Studies in the History of Art* (Vol 25, 1989), p. 306.
[89] Frank O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in "Unreformed" England: 1760-1832', in *The Journal of Modern History* (56:3, September 1984), p. 399; Rogers, 'Crowds and Political Festival', p. 239.
[90] *'Some Irregular Thoughts Addressed to the Freeholders of the County of Derby: Occasioned by the abusive Pamphlet, silly Advertisements, and Childish Behavior of Sir H------ H------'*, 1767, by Aristobulus Tertius (DLSL 4458).
[91] *Letter from Thomas Bennet to LW & Co,* 26th December 1748 (DBYMU 1992-134).
[92] Adam Nicholson, *Gentry: Six Hundred Years of a Peculiarly English Class* (London: 2012), p. 192.

in which voters cast their votes, what their occupation was, and where they resided. In heavily contested elections, such as that in 1775, on the final day of the election, when the Tory candidate was in the lead, a large batch of voters from villages surrounding the Cavendish residence at Chatsworth was found voting for his candidate. A letter from Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782) to Lord Frederick Cavendish (1729-1803) during this election confirms that this was their goal as Crompton implores Lord Frederick to send voters to Derby as they risked losing.[93] One of the few surviving records of a meeting of Derby's corporation is a resolution at a common hall in 1701 laying out explicitly the qualifications for burgesses which included stipulations that no one should be admitted who was not apprenticed to a burgess, born to a burgess father, or resident in the borough when they were admitted.[94] Other methods were used to influence and control election results which sometimes bought immediate, occasionally violent, responses. As the Derbyshire Tory candidates gained much of their support from agricultural labourers, they would all enter Derby together on the Monday, the last day of the poll, where they would drink at a local tavern before going to vote. In one incident during the 1741 election, the high sheriff and the mayor purposefully closed the poll early so this group could not place their votes, ensuring victory to the Whigs.[95] During the 1775 election, which will be discussed in depth below, one of the accusations thrown at the victorious Whig, John Gisborne (c.1717-1779), by Daniel Parker Coke (1745-1825), was that when Tory burgesses went to prove their right to vote in the weeks before the election, they were turned away.[96]

The contested election of 1775, the last contested election before 1832, is perhaps the best case study for the questionable dealings actioned by both sides in an election. It also brings us back to the question introduced at the beginning of this chapter regarding whether the political elite of the town were merely pandering to the will of the Cavendish family. As with the events of 1748 discussed earlier, the story of the 1775 election is recounted in letters sent to Lord Frederick Cavendish from both candidates who sought to support the wishes of the Cavendish family. The 1775 election shows that

[93] *Letter from Samuel Crompton to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 28th January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.22).
[94] *Borough of Derby, Common Hall Notice*, 10th November 1701 (CHA CS1/105.0).
[95] Craven, *Secret Derby*, p. 48.
[96] *To the Gentlemen, Clergy & Burgesses of the Town of Derby by Daniel Parker Coke*, 7th February 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.271).

even towards the end of the eighteenth century, Derby's political elite remained heavily linked with the rural elite even after the latter were starting to remove themselves physically from the urban scene.

The controversy surrounding the 1775 election began with a letter dated the 20th of December 1774 in which Daniel Parker Coke announced his candidacy to Lord Frederick Cavendish. It was Parker Coke's understanding that should one borough seat be secure in the Cavendish influence, as it was under Lord Frederick, the other seat was available. The support Parker Coke asked for was not one of active approbation but rather that the 5th Duke would 'not take a decided part' against him but 'concur with the sense of the Town'. [97] In his response, Lord Frederick wrote that he was 'sensible of the honour of the Town of Derby does him in choosing one of his family' and that the Cavendishes would 'follow, not lead [his underlining] the sentiments of the town' in choosing who they supported.[98] As with the 1748 election mentioned above, it would be the 'sense of the town' and the interest of the Cavendishes that this heavily contested election would pivot.

This election even crossed political divisions to create factions both for the preservation of the status quo and those who wished to challenge it. Coke was not a Whig and whilst Lord Frederick was ensuring neutrality in the choice of a candidate for the second borough seat, his representatives in the town, John Gisborne and Samuel Crompton II, were attempting to find a candidate more suited to theirs and the Duke's interest. Unfortunately for them, the Coke's of Longford (not directly related to Daniel Parker Coke), who had been supplying Whig MPs for Derby in recent years, had ran out of possible candidates with the only Coke family member without a seat being a minor. John Gisborne was eventually chosen by the Coke family and the corporation as a Whig candidate whilst Parker Coke was forming a support base from amongst the local gentry such as the Tory Poles of Radbourne, and Sir Henry Harpur (1739-1789), 6th Baronet of Calke Abbey. Harpur wished to break the hegemony of the Curzons who, although Tory,

[97] *Letter from Daniel Parker Coke to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 20th December 1774 (CHA CS5/2015.1).
[98] *Letter from Lord Frederick Cavendish (assumed) to Daniel Parker Coke*, 23rd December 1774 (CHA CS5/2015.2).

were happy sharing the county seats with the Cavendishes and therefore supported Gisborne.[99]

The 'sense of the town' and the 'Duke's interest' has been purposefully emphasised in the above paragraphs because they highlight a continuing tension in Derby's urban elections between the interest of the Cavendish family and the democratic will of the voters. After failing to get the support of the Cavendishes, Parker Coke appealed directly to the people of the town through broadsides and pamphlets. His first, dated the 16th of January 1775, claimed that Lord Frederick had 'departed from that neutrality which his family have always professed' and that Gisborne had bribed voters with town money or by threatening to take away their rights of common pasture.[100] Another pamphleteer also took up the pen against Lord Frederick claiming the Lord did not have the true 'sense of the town' and should have compared canvas books. He also called for the 'Honorary Burgess', under the influence of the Cavendish family, 'to take no part in the ensuing Election.'[101]

The 1775 election was the closest poll fought in eighteenth-century Derby with the final majority being only 14 in favour of Gisborne. At the close of the poll on the Saturday, the second day of the three-day election, with Gisborne leading by 69 votes, Samuel Crompton II fired off a quick letter to Lord Frederick urging him to send voters from Devonshire House as the Gisborne supporters required help.[102] The figures produced after the poll show that of those voters resident in the town, Parker Coke won 248 to Gisborne's 192. Of non-resident voters Parker Coke won 75 to Gisborne's 73. Of honorary burgesses Gisborne had the support of 78 to Parker Coke's six, thus ensuring victory.[103] The election therefore swung on the support for Gisborne of the overwhelming majority of honorary burgesses. It was no surprise then that John Gisborne of Staveley (b. 1727 and cousin of Gisborne) wrote to Lord Frederick informing him that the Whigs had had a 'very narrow escape'.[104]

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[99] *Letter from John Gisborne to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 31st December 1774 (CHA CS5/2015.4); Letter from *Thomas Gisborne to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 2nd January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.5).
[100] *To the Gentlemen, Clergy & Burgesses of the Town of Derby by Daniel Parker Coke*, 16th January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.181).
[101] *To Lord Frederick Cavendish by An Independent Burgess*, 18th January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.184).
[102] *Letter from Samuel Crompton to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 28th January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.22).
[103] *Electoral Statistics for the Poll at Derby*, no author, 30th January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.25).
[104] *Letter from John Gisborne of Stavely to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 30th January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.23).

The closing of the poll on the 30th of January 1775 was not the end of the matter, for on the same day, Parker Coke produced a broadside denouncing the result. He announced to the 'Gentlemen, Clergy, & Burgesses' of Derby that he would petition parliament to overturn the result due to the illegal practices of his opponents, promising that he would 'be able to break those chains which have long enslaved' the voters of the town.[105] This reference to enslavement was common in situations where corporations were seen to be over-stepping their roles as preservers of freemen rights but could also be effective in appealing to urban people and their sense of civic identity.[106] Seven days later Parker Coke furthered his claims asserting that the mayor did not allow some legal burgesses to vote.[107]

Whilst Parker Coke was looking for support for his parliamentary petition, which was ultimately successful in overturning the result, Gisborne was sending multiple letters to Lord Frederick providing excuses for why the election was so close. In a letter of the 31st of January, the day after the poll closed, Gisborne emphasised how necessary it had been to have a thorough canvas as there was always '200 ragamuffins' willing to sell their votes. Carrying on his contempt for certain trades, he claimed that Sir Henry Harpur had turned every sadler against him and Messrs Cole, every breeches-maker.[108] He also claimed in a subsequent letter that 40 or 50 of the recently made burgesses were young, intoxicated with the show and the entertainment, and subsequently voted against him. On the charges levelled by Parker Coke concerning malpractice in admitting honorary burgesses and denying voting rights to unfavourable burgesses, there was truth. In a letter of the 3rd of February, Gisborne wrote that of the 61 burgesses who went to register to vote, only 21 were admitted and 40 denied, though he does not ascertain why they were denied.[109] The returning officer for the election was the Whig mayor, Christopher Heath (1718-1815), the banker whose bankruptcy caused so much issue, as will be discussed in chapter 3.[110] During the legal case that overturned the election, it was noted that until 1772, it was customary for burgess

[105] *To the Gentlemen, Clergy & Burgesses of the Town of Derby by Daniel Parker Coke*, 30th January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.231).
[106] Rosemary Sweet, 'Freeman and Independence in English Borough Politics c.1770-1830', in *Past & Present* (No 161, November 1998), pp 84-5 and 94.
[107] *To the Gentlemen, Clergy & Burgesses of the Town of Derby by Daniel Parker Coke*, 7th February 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.271).
[108] *Letter from John Gisborne to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 31st January 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.24).
[109] *Letter from John Gisborne to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 3rd February 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.26).
[110] *The Proceedings of the Committee Appointed to Try the Merits of the Derby Election* (Derby: 1776), p. 1.

applications to be judged by atleast 20 members of the common hall whereas since 1772, it was done in front of the mayor and just three aldermen.[111] The most damning evidence came when Gisborne suggested to Lord Frederick that in the future, half a dozen honorary burgesses should be thrown in at every common hall or wherever convenient, so as not to make it too obvious what they were doing.[112] The rigging of elections therefore cannot be simply seen as reactionary but an ongoing concern of those wishing to retain control of a borough's politics.

The evidence presented here demonstrates that politics in Derby was a much more disputed process than has often been asserted and that even though most elections were not contested, different views were expressed in other ways. Although it caused more of a public struggle than usual, the contested election of 1775 demonstrates how strong these political disagreements were rather than the degree of control exercised by the Cavendish family and their agents acting with the town's political elite. The voters had to be constantly managed, appealed to, and even created for candidates to get what they wanted. Even the Duke of Devonshire, who controlled most of the seats in the county, had to canvas the town and provide food and ale for the populace to be successful when faced with opposition from rival gentry. Elections were the primary focus of the urban concerns of the rural nobility. The voters too were fully aware of their importance in urban politics taking full advantage of the benefits of canvassing and even resorting to selling their votes to desperate candidates.

Conclusion

The relationship that the rural nobility had with Derby was one of influence and cooperation but could also be one of conflict. Elections were the crucible of this relationship as politics was the primary interest of the rural nobility in urban affairs. This is where their immense influence came to bear on the town as voters were pressured, bargained with, created or denied, in attempts to win at all costs and through providing the candidates and managing the electorate through their position as landlords, bribing voters with food and money, or by creating bastard burgesses.

[111] *Proceedings of the Committee*, p. 7.
[112] *Letter from John Gisborne to Lord Frederick Cavendish*, 7th February 1775 (CHA CS5/2015.27).

The corporation was responsible for electing new members and granting burgesses rights and therefore the right to vote. Polling data has shown that the corporation was almost solidly Whig for the duration of the century and that it was only in their social make-up that there was any sense of diversity with numerous trades being represented. For much of the time the sitting body of the corporation acted without the influence of the wider burgess pool but around election times the wider body became similarly, if not more, important. The election of 1775 showed how both candidates sought to gain the support of the 5th Duke of Devonshire and his interest which they deemed essential to success, but also made sure to capture the sense of the town. Electoral candidates made sure to woo the electorate, sometimes outright bribing them with donations to secure their vote and engaging them with the well-established culture of urban ritual through celebrations of electoral success.

The corporation also used community celebrations to increase its influence in the town through their physical and ritualistic use of the marketplace. The election of mayors, the opening of fairs, and the celebration of wider political events secured this connection between the political body and the physical space through celebration, displays of power, and frivolity. These celebrations could be politically motivated either through the obvious support of one electoral candidate over another or less obviously through the choosing of which national events to celebrate.

This chapter has argued that Derby's Georgian corporation was not politically oligarchic with several instances of internal divisions. It was also not socially closed-off with the trades and professions represented in the main corporate body being indicative of the wider economic structure of the town's urban elite. This chapter has also shown that the interest of the Dukes of Devonshire was essential to the main body of the corporation and that the aldermen at least were willing to defer fully to his will. The brethren and common council, as seen in 1748 in their choice of new alderman and in the election of the same year, did attempt to break the hegemony of the 3rd Duke's influence in the corporation, eventually winning the election with an independent Whig who was not supported by him. In that instance, it was the mayor and five aldermen who were trying to avert the crisis, choosing favourable candidates to be promoted to the bench of aldermen and maintaining Cavendish influence. Those at the very top of the corporate structure were therefore able to wield great influence over proceedings, if not always

successfully. This very small group of men also served as justices of the peace and were dominated by professionals, most particularly lawyers and bankers. Their effect on the governance of the town through legal and financial order, is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Legal and Financial 'Order' in Eighteenth-century Derby

This thesis has so far shown that influence on urban affairs was often consolidated into a small group, but this group changed and fluctuated throughout the eighteenth century. This chapter will examine the professions, another influential group within the urban elite whose social and economic position gave them greater powers in town governance, particularly because the civil restrictions placed upon dissenters were largely circumvented or ignored. The professions provided much of the urban magistracy, building on the influence they had already gained through their occupations. Lawyers and bankers particularly provided the core of Derby's eighteenth-century corporation and urban elite involving themselves politically and financially in all areas of the town. This chapter will first detail the legal and financial elements that supported the town's role as a service centre by looking at the influence that lawyers and bankers had on urban life through the powers they held by virtue of their unique position at the top of the urban hierarchy. It will also examine at how these same professionals, and other members of the urban elite, handled riots in their roles as justices of the peace and how power during rioting had to be shared between law makers and law breakers.

Historically, the professions were occupations but professionals, as an identifiable historical group, stemmed from those occupations based on skill, knowledge and expertise.[1] As with the term 'gentleman', a professional was 'anyone who had public acceptance as such'.[2] They could use 'Mr', frequently used 'gentlemen' and if they were full lawyers, employed the term 'esquire' which they often used on poll books in place of their trades.[3] Sweet contends that the use of such terms was indicative of the success of the middling sorts and the 'recognition of their own growing prosperity and self-confidence.'[4] The professionals can therefore be split into two groups: those with titles

[1] Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London: 2000), p. 19.
[2] Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 26.
[3] Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society, 1680-1730* (London: 1982), p. 9; Jon Stobart, 'Who Were the Urban Gentry? Social Elites in an English Provincial Town c.1680-1760', in *Continuity and Change* (26:1, 2011), p. 95.
[4] Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society, and Culture* (New York: 1999), p. 195.

gained only through the undertaking of specific training, such as lawyers, and those without, such as bankers. All of them were centred on the 'professional training in specialist knowledge to be applied in the service of others.'[5] The seniority of the professions in the urban hierarchy stemmed from 'their command of professional knowledge' which caused the rest of the populace to credit them with 'mysterious powers'.[6] Historians who have studied the professions have noted that unlike other social groups mentioned in this thesis, they were aware of their importance as a group and that there was a sense of group solidarity.[7] Lawyers in particular were said to have valued themselves on their 'independence' as a group.[8] The rise of the professions came from the 'influence of an increasingly complex economy and society leading to an almost 70 per cent increase in those employed in them'.[9] Corfield has also identified a 'very striking feature' of the professions being that they often recruited directly from within their own ranks, or from neighbouring professions, which stemmed from this group identity, common in prestige occupations.[10] Provincial attorneys, for example, often became handlers of money in the absence of county banks, eventually becoming bankers themselves.[11] A concentration of urban professionals was a particular characteristic of county towns because of their role as service centres.[12] Ellis has placed stable business and professional families as the core of county towns such as Derby who were 'central to their social and political life' as well as to the 'smooth functioning of their economies.'[13]

The first section of this chapter will establish the professionals as a recognisable urban group before focussing on lawyers and bankers, the trades that were represented by the most influential Derby families. The increasing requirement for legal services caused by the numeric rise in acts of parliament, land disputes, and improvement commissions led

[5] Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 19.
[6] Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 2.
[7] Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 20.
[8] Holmes, *Augustan England*, p. 116.
[9] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford: 1991), p. 205.
[10] Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 228.
[11] Holmes, *Augustan England*, p. 157; Barrie Trinder, 'Towns and Industries: The Changing of Manufacturing Towns', in Jon Stobart and Neil Raven (ed.), *Towns, Regions and Industries: Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands, c.1700-1840* (Manchester: 2008), p. 106.
[12] Peter Borsay, 'The Development of Provincial Urban Culture, c.1680-1760', in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (New York: 1995), p. 174.
[13] Joyce Ellis, 'Regional and County Centres 1700-1840, in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Vol 2 1540-1840* (Cambridge: 2000), p. 691.

to an influx of legal practitioners in urban centres who often inhabited the grandest town houses. The reach of urban bankers was less visible but equally influential. The Crompton family of bankers were perhaps the most important family in long eighteenth-century Derby providing more mayors than any other family and having members involved in politics, improvement, and culture at all times as commissioners, financiers or treasurers. The collapse of the Heath bank in the 1770s, the subsequent list of properties during the liquidation of their assets, and the knock-on effect as other businesses collapsed as a result, shows how important urban bankers were to the liquidity of urban economies. This chapter will also analyse the poor law and charity, economic practices that tied the top and bottom of urban society together. The second section of this chapter will explore rioting, and the threat of it with reports of the actions of law maker and law breaker in local newspapers earning the most narration of any event, such was its importance.

It will argue that the bonds of power characterised by the use of legal knowledge in all areas of urban life, the transfer of money between the top and bottom of the urban social system, and the coming together of rioters and justices in times of unrest, cemented a much broader social interaction than was evident in political or cultural life in the borough.

Derby's Urban Professionals

Until the end of the period, those forming the main body of the legal profession, or those 'who practised the forms or "mechanics" of the law' were split into two groups, the solicitors and the attorneys, 'officially distinct from each other' but, in realty, 'difficult to disentangle'.[14] Attorneys constituted the 'lower' branch' of the legal professions whose primary role was to brief and assist barristers but were also involved in drawing up 'wills, deeds and marriage settlements, witnessed oaths, audited accounts, held manorial courts, clerked for public bodies and acted as property conveyancers' and also served as urban representatives for noble families. Attorneys could also serve as financial intermediaries before provincial banks were established, giving them a wide remit over urban life.[15] Becoming a full attorney required a great deal of cost whereas

[14] Holmes, *Augustan England,* p. 118.
[15] Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 73.

becoming a solicitor was free, so many of the legal professionals became solicitors with some self-advertising as attorneys. As with the other professions, solicitors and attorneys relied on titles to convey their importance. Attorneys called themselves esquires, and solicitor called themselves gentlemen, otherwise there was ostensibly little to separate them.[16]

The degree of wealth and success of eighteenth-century urban lawyers can be measured by the size of the town houses they purchased or constructed. John Gisborne (1717-1779), a member of the Gisborne family of Derby and Yoxall, was responsible for the building of 'New St Helen's House' when he moved from the Jacobean House in the Wardwick, another prominent Derby dwelling built by the family. Constructed in 1767, Gisborne was able to pay for St Helen's House through the wealth he accrued from being the agent of the Cavendish family and looking after their political interests.[17] The most successful Georgian lawyers benefitted from the increase in official documents and knowledge of the laws that ran through urban life with acts of Parliament, the running of gentry estates, elections, and recording sessions all requiring the special knowledge and experience of lawyers. This is reflected in the increase legal presence found in Derby in this period with lawyers either participating as members, or as advisors to all the governing bodies that this thesis discusses such as the corporation, the parishes, and the improvement commissions. On top of this, the 1775 Derby election, as discussed in chapter two, was contended by two lawyers, both born in Derby, in John Gisborne and Daniel Parker Coke (1745-1825).

Becoming a lawyer took time and money with full legal training lasting up to eight years and costing around £1,500.[18] Even after this there was no guarantee of any earnings meaning that becoming a lawyer was a financial risk.[19] There was no shortage of potential earnings in provincial government though from corporations, the courts and the gentry. Corporations set aside part of their yearly budget for legal services as their role as landowners, whilst protecting burgess rights (or circumventing them in certain

[16] Holmes, *Augustan England*, pp. 9, 119, and 158.
[17] Mark Girouard, *The English Town* (New Haven: 1990), p. 112.
[18] James A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760* (London: 2008), p. 196.
[19] Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*, p. 61.

cases), required constant legal advice.[20] As acts of Parliament were rare before 1750, a lawyer was a necessity to guide the process. Add to this that improvement acts were renewed every 21 years, and the fact that towns usually had multiple acts active for river navigations, turnpikes, and other improvements at the same time, there was tremendous opportunity for income.[21] In 1709 the Derby Company of Mercers, whilst discussing how to proceed in legal action against offenders, sought the counsel of Sir Thomas Parker (1666-1732), MP for Derby and member of the bar.[22] During arguments over who was responsible for repairing the roads, the several parishes of the town sought legal advice from lawyers practising within their bounds, often ending up with a large amount of legal fees with St Alkmund's parish paying £12 for legal fees for the trial against the parishes of All Saints' and St Michael's in 1714.[23] In a subsequent trial on the same issue which started in 1732 and ran for over five years, St Alkmund's parish was forced to sell off property and borrow from alderman Thomas Gisborne (c.1679-1760), one of the wealthiest members of the vestry, to settle their legal bills which, although the final sum is obscure, ran to over £100.[24] The Derby Canal committee at the end of the century also had legal fees as a constant expenditure with the solicitors bill in 1793 amounting to £1771.10s with an extra £11.11s retaining fees and £10.10s gratuity for the clerks and £27.6s to a Mr Grahams and £31.10s to a Mr Clarke for attending the second reading of the bill in Parliament. In total the legal fees amounted to over half the yearly expenditure of the canal committee in 1793.[25] These examples signify how much effort, specialist knowledge, and financial output was required for most aspects of urban government whilst also highlighting the potential income of lawyers attached to such governing bodies.

Lawyers also often worked closely with bankers and therefore shared a similar importance to urban governance with the two professions often reliant upon each other. The role of the banker in the British economy in this period has been underrated

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[20] Joanna Innes and Nicholas Rogers, 'Politics and Government 1700-1840' in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, p. 550.
[21] Bryan Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System* (London: 1980) p. 126.
[22] *Derby Company of Mercers Minute Book 1675-1740*, 5th April 1709 (Parcel 200, DLSL).
[23] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 19th June 1714 (M167 Vol 2, DRO).
[24] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 26th June 1732, 13th May 1734, 30th March 1736, 27th July 1737, 4th September 1739, and 10th June 1740 (Parcel 200, DLSL).
[25] *Derby Canal Company Minutes 1793-1820*, 24th August 1793, £1852.7.0 out of a total expenditure of £3469.5.0½ (DL76/138 DLSL).

as they connected 'savers and investors' and provided 'the system with liquidity to facilitate the exchange process.'[26] Corfield does not include bankers in the list of urban professions but their reliance on esoteric knowledge to function in a relatively new role certainly fits the definition Corfield uses.[27] Private banking was a relatively new concept in late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century provincial England but in Derby, Abraham Crompton (1649-1724) had built 'one of the earliest provincial banking houses' in the marketplace in 1685.[28] The Crompton family, which was involved in banking for the remainder of our period and beyond, went on to hold the mayoralty 11 times between 1735 and 1834 through four family members, which was the most of any family, with the Leaper family of bankers being third with three family members holding the mayoral office eight times between them.[29] This demonstrates the influence that bankers had on urban life in Derby with several serving in the top levels of the corporation at any one time. More than most professions, the reputation of bankers was based largely on trust as well as competence, evident from the bank notes being hand signed therefore relying solely on the credit-worthiness of the signatory.[30] This influence at Derby was not limited to one banking family with the Cromptons and Leapers being joined by the Newtons, Chases, Evans, and Heaths during the eighteenth century.[31] All of these families are evident in the corporation, the parishes, or the improvement commissions in the period often becoming the most important active members. Any money held for long periods of time either for improvements, charity, or for the corporation, tended to be held by members of these families.

It is difficult to identify the full range of business concerns of Derby's Georgian banking families apart from through sale adverts in newspapers for land and property. For one banking family, the Heaths, we are able to produce quite a strong picture of the financial

[26] Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: Britain and the Industrial Revolution* (London: 2009), p. 221.
[27] Corfield, *Power and the Professions.*
[28] Holmes, *Augustan England*, p157; Maxwell Craven, *Derbeians of Distinction* (Derby: 1998), p. 61.
[29] Maxwell Craven, *An Illustrated History of Derby*, (Derby: 2007), p. 159.
[30] Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: 2006), p. 210.
[31] Alderman Richard Leaper (1759-1838) was a banker and Distributor of Government Stamps and Thomas Evans (1723-1814) was banker as well as a Cotton Manufacturer, see Maxwell Craven, *Derbeians of Distinction* (Derby: 1998), pp82 and 130. The Newtons were banking partners with the Cromptons. The Crompton and Newton bank held the subscription money for the 1792 Paving and Lighting Commission, see Desmond King-Hele (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin* (Cambridge: 2007), p461. William Chase was described as a banker in the *Derby Mercury*, 31st July 1767. The Heath brothers are discussed later in this chapter.

interests due to their bank crashing in 1779, the aftermath of which is well evidenced by sale adverts, meetings of creditors and a sudden increase in bankruptcies in Derby, all reported by the *Derby Mercury*. On the 12th of March 1779, an advert appeared in the *Mercury* asking for creditors of Christopher (1718-1815) and John Heath (1709-1786) to meet at the George Inn to nominate assignees of their estate. The brothers appear to have gone on the run shortly after with calls in the May of 1779 for them to surrender themselves and make a full declaration of their estates.[32] As the year progressed, scarcely an edition of the *Mercury* was published without reference to Heath property being for sale. On the 4th of June the famous Derby china works, founded by Andrew Planche (c.1727-1805) in the 1750s, were listed, allowing the buyer to pull it down if he wanted.[33] On November 26th, four houses in Cockpit Hill (near the china works) and two butchers shops were listed.[34] Estates in Makeney, Belper, Duffield were then listed for sale alongside houses in Full Street, Sadlergate, Corn Market, Nuns Green, Bridgegate in the centre of Derby plus land in St Alkmund's parish and Spondon and Chaddesden (villages on the outskirts of the town).[35] In 1780, more property appeared for sale including other houses in Full Street, a house in Sutton, a messuage in Wirksworth, 30 tenements and a silk mill in Walker Lane, a pew in All Saints' Church, securities in six separate turnpike trusts, and shares in eight lead mines.[36] So extensive was the Heath brothers' property portfolio and so large was the amount they owed, that their assignees were still meeting to pay creditors and sell property in July 1798, 19 years after the failure of their bank.[37]

It was not just the Heath's properties that were affected by the crash as the ripple effects appear to touch almost every part of the town. Although it is difficult to confirm a connection, it is notable that within a year of the collapse of the Heath bank, a much higher number of businesses went bankrupt than was usual in any other year covered by the *Derby Mercury*. Within a few months of the banking collapse, the wine business of Benjamin Oakes (c.1746-1785) and Thomas Brentnall had had gone bankrupt.[38] Brentnall's wine lodge was a favourite meeting spot of the Cavendish Bridge Turnpike

[32] *Derby Mercury,* 14th May 1779.
[33] *Derby Mercury,* 4th June 1779.
[34] *Derby Mercury,* 26th November 1779.
[35] *Derby Mercury,* 24th and 31st December 1779.
[36] *Derby Mercury,* 24th March 1780, 12 May 1780 and 27th October 1780.
[37] *Derby Mercury,* 12th July 1798.
[38] *Derby Mercury,* 7th May 1779 and 4th June 1779.

trust for which John Heath was the clerk. Two months later Messrs George Bruckfield (d. 1799) and Co, mercers and drapers, had gone bankrupt and by November, Henry Flint (d. 1792), another mercer, had gone bust too.[39] In February of the following year, Anthony Wild, and the joiners Charles (d. 1828) and John Finney were handing their effects over to trustees to pay off debts.[40] The final possible connected bankruptcy occurred in January of 1781 when John Webster, a banker and money scrivener who also had a financial interest in the Cavendish Bridge trust, went under, having to sell off wharves and warehouses at Shardlow along with the Cavendish Boat Company. It is also possible that the Cavendish Bridge to Brassington turnpike trust was a casualty of the Heath bankruptcy. From 1780 onwards, there is no reference to this trust but a London to Brassington turnpike trust appears meeting at the George Inn. It is therefore possible that the original trust failed financially and had to be subsumed into a bigger trust to keep that section of the road in repair.[41]

The sale of the Heath estate shows that some bankers invested heavily in land and property and loaned money to different individuals and business ventures but could overstretch themselves. Diversification was undoubtedly seen as a way of making their position more secure so they could survive recessions but as Mokyr has shown, Georgian bankers could not afford for any of their investments to fail so it could be a double-edged sword to stretch themselves.[42] The bankruptcies that surrounded the collapse of the Heath bank could also show that on top of their personal estates, bankers were able to provide investment for many others. It is therefore of no surprise that banking families appear regularly at the top of Derby's urban society in the eighteenth century and will be continually evident in the remained of this thesis.

Financial Control and the Poor Law

The poor were a constant concern of urban officials and the chief recipients of their time and finances. The officials had the power to choose who received aid and who did not, often evoking the idea of the 'deserving poor'. The parish could mould poor law recipients by placing rules of qualification on financial handouts or through keeping them in the workhouse. Those professionals who generated wealth also had a

[39] *Derby Mercury,* 13th August 1779 and 26th November 1779.
[40] *Derby Mercury,* 11th and 18th February 1780.
[41] *Derby Mercury,* 1st June 1781.
[42] Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*, pp. 222-3.

paternalistic responsibility through custom, and as members of parishes, to distribute aid to the needy. This would either be in the form of charitable subscriptions, one-off donations, or through sending the poor into almshouses, if they passed entrance criteria, or the workhouses. The latter institutions not only served to deal with the long-term poor but also became the physical manifestation of financial inequality on the urban scene.

Destitution as an ever-present possibility, even for prosperous traders, ensured that the treatment and governance of the poor was essential. Different trades set up ways to help their workforce avoid poor law dependency such as the brush makers who would give unemployed workers enough money to travel to the next town to seek work (the Lord Nelson served as Derby's tramping stop for this trade) and so on in what Hobsbawm called the 'artisans equivalent of the Grand Tour'.[43] Not only was the availability of work a delicate state, but so too was the availability of food. Although England never experienced complete harvest failure in the eighteenth century, there were periods of rioting, often over shortages (or high prices) of food stuffs such as the flour riot of 1756 and cheese riot of 1766. Rule has argued that 80% of the income of working men and women went towards buying food with most of it on bread alone, so any rise in food costs was likely to hit very hard.[44] The *Derby Mercury* had regular notices from the mayor attempting to prevent further damage to the market like the one in 1766 which said that the 'poor of this town…have suffered greatly by the dearness of all kinds of provisions; and not withstanding a plentiful and good harvest, the markets are but thinly supplied with corn: this is therefore to desire the farmers to bring their corn to market…'[45] Relieving the poor can therefore be seen as a responsibility of the town's elites as individuals, rather than officials, as it was a concern for all bodies of urban government.

There are many cases in the *Derby Mercury* of one-off donations from the local elite, often in response to or because of certain local events. It was customary, for example, on the death of a member of the Cavendish family for money to be given to the poor of the

[43] William A. Richardson, *Citizen's Derby* (London: 1949), p. 168 and Eric Hobsbawm quoted in Edward P. Thompson*, The Making of the English Working Class* (London: 1991), p. 267.
[44] John Rule*, Albion's People: English Society 1714-1815* (New York: 1994), p. 196.
[45] Michael Thomas., 'The Rioting Crowd in Derbyshire in the 18th Century' in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 95, 1975), p. 42.

borough in the name of either the deceased via their will or a surviving member as an acknowledgement of the solemn observance of the funeral procession.[46] The Cavendish family, most notably those individuals running for election, would also give one-off donations during times of food scarcity showing that Derby was important enough to the family for them to show constant interest in the welfare of the poor and highlighting their acknowledgement of their paternalism over the borough.

For the urban elite, the welfare of Derby's destitute was a much more visible and obvious matter. Mrs Lowe gave a beast and bread yearly to the poor from at least 1782 to her death in 1789. Most donations were one-offs made directly to the overseers of the poor in the parishes on the instruction that it would be distributed to the poor. With their land and income, gentry were normally the most economically secure, but they did have responsibilities to their tenants and those they employed. In 1757, Nathanial Curzon increased his labourers' wages by 1s a week due to a scarcity of food whilst Hugh Bateman gave 10% of rent received back to his tenants in 1783.[47] Those with commercial interests were also able to use their influence to benefit the poor such as Daniel Parker Coke in 1789 selling 50 tons of coal for a cheaper price whilst in 1767, John Gisborne ordered seven quarts of wheat to be distributed for free amongst the poor of St Alkmund's parish.[48]

If a person could not support themselves financially, they fell upon their parish for relief. The collection and distribution of poor rates was a legal requirement of the parish but how it was distributed, and to whom, was solely the responsibility of the overseers of the poor and the vestry. In 1690, one in ten were eligible for some sort of poor relief for which the parish was responsible, and this took the form of a weekly stipend, a one-off payment, clothing, or a residency in the workhouse.[49] At certain points in the century a parish might have favoured a different mode of relief as their standard. For All Saints' in the first half of the century, weekly payments were the regular mode of relief. After

[46] From *Derby Mercury*: £100 left by William Cavendish (1720-1764), 4th Duke of Devonshire for poor of borough 26th October 1764, Lords George (1727-1794) and Frederick (1729-1803) gave 100gs to poor burgesses to commemorate late mother, Catherine Cavendish (1700-1777), 20 June 1777, Lord Charles (1704-1783) gives £100 to the mayor for poor for legacy of Elizabeth Cavendish (1712-1779), 28 Jan 1780, £100 to the town clerk for the poor by late William Ponsonby (1704-1793), 2nd Earl of Bessborough, 28th March 1793.
[47] *Derby Mercury,* 11th March 1757 and 1st May 1783.
[48] *Derby Mercury*, 22nd January 1789 and 16th January 1767.
[49] Richardson, *Citizen's Derby*, p. 113

the workhouse opened in 1731, that too became the main source of relief confirmed by an order by the vestry saying that 'No Weekly pay nor Rents Shall henceforth be paid to any Person belonging to this Parish, and that all Persons that Cannot Maintain themselves must come into the Workhouse'.[50]

Workhouses were a last resort for the urban poor who were reliant on financial help and were there to deter outsiders rather than care for those inside.[51] They were usually located in older dwellings within the parish that had been adapted for the purpose and rarely, until the end of the period, were they purpose built.[52] As the eighteenth century progressed, workhouses were created, evolved and then became standardised with the passing of the Workhouse Test Act (1723) and then Gilbert's Act (1782) which regulated them and encouraged parish cooperation in their administration. Anyone who refused to enter them was ineligible for any further parish aid, as outlined in the 1723 act.[53] Before the 1782 act, each Derby parish had their own workhouses containing a handful of occupants often in an ordinary house in the parish. For St Alkmund's parish, the minutes state that in 1727 a large house was pulled down and replaced with six houses for the poor and a workhouse constructed at another location.[54] In 1730 it was to be placed in the churchyard.[55] A year later it was on Nuns Green where it remained until at least the end of the century, surviving the enclosure of the land around it, of which a piece was bought by the parish.[56]

Almshouses, on the other hand, were purpose built and financed from the bequests of rich benefactors and provided accommodation to a small number of poor people.[57] Where they differ from workhouses is that the entry criteria were much more stringent. For example, the Dukes of Devonshire were charged with the upkeep of the almshouses on Full Street, established by Bess of Hardwick (1527-1608) in the sixteenth century,

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[50] *All Saints Workhouse Minute Book 1731-77*, 10th July 1732 (DRO LD3372/132/1)
[51] Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (New York: 1999), p. 134.
[52] Alannah Tomkins, 'Almshouse Versus Workhouse: Residential Welfare in 18th-Century Oxford', in *Family & Community History*, (7:1, 2004), p. 48.
[53] Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: 2001), pp10-13.
[54] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 14th January 1717 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[55] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 6th July 1730 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[56] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 21st February 1732 (DRO M167 Vol 2); *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1783-1822*, 4th December 1795 (DRO M167 Vol 3).
[57] Tomkins, 'Almshouse Versus Workhouse', p. 48.

who limited entry to old or diseased ex-servants of the duke or decrepit ex-burgesses.[58] Almshouses also gave the benefactors a chance to show their charitable nature by attaching their names to the buildings or, again in the case of the Dukes of Devonshire, putting their coat of arms above the entrance. That said, even having a rich and obvious benefactor did not secure the almshouse from distress or disuse. In the Report of the Charity Commission in 1829, the Wilmots of Osmaston were upbraided for the condition in which their almshouses in Bridge Gate had been left plus the fact that the 'residents' did not reside in the buildings due to their state.[59]

Where almshouses and workhouses were similar is that they were able to exert an element of control over inhabitants that went further than the four walls of the properties. Both the parishes and the rich benefactors saw a chance to model the urban poor more towards their own ideas on morality. When a recipient for charity was sought, the wording often called for those who were diligent, moral, or hard-working. Admittance to Wilmot's almshouses, for example, was reserved for the those leading a 'good and honest life' whereas the Liversage almshouses required those with the 'best moral character'.[60] Once inside the alms or workhouses, residents were restricted by extensive rules governing their life. Samuel Cockeram was confined to the All Saints' workhouse prison in 1735 for meeting Ellen Reeve at 'unseasonable hours in several Publick Houses' whilst Ellen had her allowance halved.[61] At the Full Street almshouses, inhabitants could not 'marry, nor get drunk, without expulsion; to lie out one night incurs a forfeiture of four-pence; to miss prays [sic] at All Saints, two pence; to be absent one day, sixpence; to strike a blow, one shilling; and three blows, a discharge.'[62] To ensure that those receiving charity did not forget the expectations of them, they were given obvious forms of identification or, as Hindle proposes, as forms of humiliation. [63] The inhabitants of Wilmot's almshouses wore black gowns, faced with red whilst the Full Street inhabitants wore 'dark cloaks badged with E.S. (Elizabeth Shrewsbury) on a

[58] Catherine Glover and Philip Riden (eds.), *William Woolley's History of Derbyshire* (Chesterfield: 1981), pp. 27-28.
[59] *Extract of so much of the 17th report of the Commissioners of Charities as relates to the Borough of Derby*, May 1826 (DLSL 3906) pp. 15-6.
[60] Stephen Glover, *Glover's Derby*, facsimile edition of 1849 publication (Derby: 1992), pp. 39 and 41.
[61] *All Saints Workhouse Minute Book 1731-77*, 5th January 1735 (DRO LD3372/132/1).
[62] William Hutton, *The History of Derby*, 2nd edition with additions by J.B. Nichols (London: 1817), p. 43.
[63] Steve Hindle, 'Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c.1550-1750', in *Cultural and Social History* (1:1, 2004), p. 8.

silver plate.[64] The workhouses were no different. St Alkmund's parish required all receivers of parish money to wear badges, as did All Saints' workhouse committee who also decreed that inhabitants of their workhouse were not allowed to leave without wearing one.[65] It is unclear whether or not this was an attempt by these two Derby parishes to ostracise alms and poor law receivers from the rest of society as a deterrent to the non-poor or a way to keep them in line making welfare as much 'an act of control as of relief.'[66] For example in Norwich, those seen wearing workhouse badges in a pub were likely to lose their relief.[67] Either way, it appears as though the poor had little choice but to accept, to 'accept the badge of dependency, or to go without.'[68]

This section has shown how urban charity was an obligation, rather than altruistic, but this was due to several factors. Firstly, parish finances had to be carefully managed to ensure those eligible for relief could receive it, even if this meant being strict against those they could legally refuse to serve. Secondly, eighteenth-century charity was rarely philanthropic and often had a self-serving purpose, as shown with almshouses and workhouses, or was a legal necessity as with the poor law. Charity was also an opportunity to influence the urban poor by placing strict qualifications on who could receive aid and how it was used. One of these qualifications was that recipients had to be regular church goers, with fines given to non-attenders of services or money given to those who attended.

Maintaining Order

Justices of the peace or magistrates were tasked with maintain peace in the communities they resided. Qualification as a justice in urban centres was often attached to local government, such as members of the corporation, whereas in rural settings, justices were often the local ruling class. This meant the urban magistrates could be traders and mercers, taken from the community they were to protect, whereas county magistrates were gentry, specifically chosen for the task. They were also preferred to be

[64] Glover, *Glover's Derby,* p. 40; Hutton, *History of Derby,* p. 42.
[65] *All Saints Workhouse Minute Book 1731-77*, 12th July 1731 (DRO LD3372/132/1); *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 25th October 1720 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[66] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 296.
[67] John Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns 1660-1722* (Oxford: 2007), p. 71.
[68] Hindle, 'Badging the Deserving Poor', p. 32.

detached from urban society, enough that they did not conciliate too much with the populace who they would rely on for business. The shopkeeper magistrates of Kingston-upon-Hull, for example, would end up having to try their own customers.[69] It also meant that many did not serve long enough to 'gain sufficient experience' or follow a 'consistent policy'.[70] In Derby, the justices of the peace were the mayor, the previous mayor, four senior aldermen, the town clerk, and the recorder.[71] Thus the urban political and professional elite had another avenue through which to exercise power with their primary role as magistrates being to maintain order. Rioting was a common occurrence in the eighteenth century often happening during periods of economic slump or bad harvest and were considered serious breaches of the peace, causing frantic action by the ruling elite to prevent its spread. Stevenson has argued that such disturbances were a 'barometer of social and political stability' whilst Tilly has written that it was the authorities, who had far greater control than the challengers in popular disturbance, who often decided whether violence would break out.[72] This section will argue that as the century progressed, there is evidence of greater control by Derby's justices over urban spaces and behaviours.

Rioting in the eighteenth century was not simply a mass outbreak of violence in an otherwise peaceful urban scene but part of the political ritual. According to Thompson the 'rulers and crowd needed each other' and 'watched each other' creating a 'theatre and counter theatre' that 'moderated each other's political behaviour.'[73] To Thompson, this was all part of the 'moral economy', an extension of the paternalistic connection between the rulers and the ruled which, in this context, supposedly governed the market in times of dearth. [74] The ruling classes would strive to ensure that a steady supply of produce made it to the marketplace whilst condemning the middle men who artificially raised prices through engrossing, forestalling and regrating. Their role in

[69] Frédéric Moret, *The End of the Urban Ancient Regime in England* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: 2015), p. 241; *Report on Municipal Corporations* (Vol. 26), p. 2905.
[70] Thomas Skyrme, *History of the Justices of the Peace* (Chichester: 1994), pp. 354 and 365.
[71] Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: Science and Culture in British Urban Society 1700-1850*, (Manchester: 2009), p. 87.
[72] John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1832*, 2nd edition (New York: 1992), pp. 1 and 308.
[73] Edward P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: 1993), p. 57.
[74] This theory was first put forth in Edward P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' in *Past & Present* (No 50, Feb 1971) before receiving elaboration in Thompson's *Customs in Common.*

riots was to 'balance force with remedy' and to 'rejuvenate paternalist mythology.' Bohstedt believed that 'common folk would acquiesce in inequalities of power' if they felt their needs were being met, or at least considered, by the ruling class.[75] Conversely, if pushed to rioting by inaction on behalf of the magistrates, the crowd would seize goods but would often pay at a price they felt was fair.[76] By responding to riot with price fixing or enforcing the laws against forestallers, the elite all but legitimized both the principles and the rights of the crowd to act as they had.[77]

This theory, whilst maintaining a central place in the history of eighteenth-century riots, has also garnered criticism. For one, the middling sorts are completely absent from Thompson's theory, which concerned only the 'plebian and the patrician'.[78] The middling sorts may have been able to survive dearth, either through financial flexibility or having other avenues for food, but the newspapers, the cultural product of the middling sort, were quick to condemn forestallers and the like though without actively calling for rioting and, in Derby's case at least, members of the middling sorts could be justices.[79] Stevenson rejected the idea that price fixing was merely a part of 'plebian culture' arguing that it was a 'gesture of displeasure at exploitation and malpractice' that cannot be taken out of its localised context to support a generalised overarching statement.[80] Bohstedt on the other hand, claimed the theory was untenable and that a 'pragmatic economy' existed instead where 'both rioters and magistrates acted with an eye to political calculation rather than hoary traditions.'[81]

The historiography of rioting crowds in the eighteenth century therefore underscores the degree to which these group behaviours were sometimes deliberate and

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[75] John Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition in England c.1550-1850* (Abingdon: 2016), p. 2.
[76] H. T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century* Britain (Basingstoke: 1995), p. 158; Thompson, 'The Moral Economy', p. 123.
[77] Andrew Charlesworth, 'From the Moral Economy of Devon to the Political Economy of Manchester, 1790-1812', in *Social History* (18:2, 1993), p. 210.
[78] Edward P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture', in *Journal of Social History* (7:4, 1974); Peter King, 'Edward Thompson's Contribution to Eighteenth-Century Studies: The Patrician-Plebeian Model Re-examined', in *Social History* (21:2, 1996), p. 226.
[79] Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth, 'The Moral Economy: Riots, Markets and Social Conflict', in Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Culture and Authority* (Basingstoke: 2000), p8; Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford: 2006), p. 5.
[80] John Stevenson, 'The "Moral Economy" of the English Crowd: Myth and Reality', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: 1985), p. 238
[81] John Bohstedt, 'The Pragmatic Economy, the Politics of Provisions and the "Invention" of the Food Riot Tradition in 1749', in Randall and Charlesworth (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest*, p. 55.

coordinated acts, the precise circumstances of which repay careful study. Borsay has included riots as part of the wider urban culture of ritual in this period, contending that it was the threat of violence, rather than its actual use that was the ultimate aim of many rioters.[82] Rule has also written about food riots only threatening violence and argues that magistrates were aware of that and so were more likely to be conciliatory.[83] Thomas, who focussed on riots in Derbyshire in this period, found that the crowd was not motivated solely by high prices and hunger but that grievances 'operated within a popular consensus as to what were fair' practices in 'marketing, milling and baking' and that the crowd felt they were defending rights and customs rather than forcing an immediate response.[84] Thomas also takes Thompson's 'theatre' analogy further, arguing that Whigs and Tories adopted a 'common stance' towards the crowd and that in times of disturbance they 'closed their ranks' to 'preserve the cultural hegemony of the gentry as a class', and that although different 'plays might be permitted: the audience might even hiss or pelt the actors: but the theatre itself must not be pulled down.'[85] Wood, focussing on the Derbyshire lead mines also touched upon this idea of ritualized contempt as the 'language of deference held a real force' founded upon an 'unequal distribution of power' that required constant maintenance through 'coercion and contempt' by the elites but that also fed 'ritualised exchanges between social groups which might mask a real friendship', thus supporting Thompson's 'moral economy theory.[86] Wood also identified that the rioters were 'conscious of the necessary bounds of their rebelliousness' thus further suggesting a ritualised approach to rioting.[87] The historiography of riots therefore has stressed that urban disturbances cannot simply be seen as reactionary outbreaks of violence that provoked equally aggressive reactions from the magistracy. It was instead an essential part of urban culture that cemented social harmony rather than breaking it.[88] Ellis has noted that it was a 'sense of community interest' that encouraged borough authorities to stand as both peacemakers and peacekeepers.[89]

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[82] Peter Borsay, 'All the Town's a Stage: Urban Ritual and Ceremony', in Clark (ed.), *Transformation of English Provincial Town*, p. 236.
[83] John Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850* (New York: 1998), p. 253.
[84] Thomas, 'The Rioting Crowd', p. 42.
[85] Thomas, 'The Rioting Crowd', p. 45.
[86] Andy Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: The Peak country 1520-1770* (Cambridge: 1999), p. 21.
[87] Wood, *Politics of Social Conflict*, p. 314.
[88] John M. Golby and A. William Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd* (London: 1984), p. 49.
[89] Joyce Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680-1840* (Basingstoke: 2001), p. 108.

Chapter two showed how an unwanted election result could lead to violence and officials wished to head this off before it started. Mayor John Bagnold (1672-1738) in 1727 threatened those 'found assembling in riotous and tumultuous manner, or otherwise hindering or obstructing or endeavouring to hinder or obstruct any Burgess or Burgesses from coming into the said Borough' during an election.[90] Poor harvests and the resulting rise in the price of basic food stuffs though were the most common cause of riots and disturbances. In 1740, William Evans (d. 1773) and Isaac Turner sent two wagons of flour to Leek, contrary to law. A mob overtook and looted them with women seen to be filling their aprons with flour. Thomas Gisborne, a justice of the peace, managed to persuade them to return the wagons to Derby where they were looted again. It was stopped by the reading of the riot act which, after 1715, outlawed assemblies of 12 or more people 'tumultuously assembled together, to the disturbance of the public peace' and gave those assembled one hour to leave the area or face imprisonment.[91] This follows a common theme of riots in the first half of the eighteenth century where the focus was very much on seizing goods that were being transported.[92]

This incident was perhaps in the mind of the justices during an inflation in the price of corn in 1756. In August of that year, an incendiary letter was dropped in the marketplace inciting the burgesses to riot. The corporation were quick to react, firstly threatening any burgesses who did riot with disenfranchisement, whilst also insisting that care was being taken to keep corn prices low thus highlighting the moral economy discussed above.[93] The mayor at the time was William Evans, the same person who 16 years earlier had been robbed of his flour by the crowd during a similar riot. He owned a flour mill in Darley, just north of the town, and he was to come under particular scrutiny for his actions. In the September of 1756 events escalated when miners from the peak came to town and destroyed Evans' mill at Derby, Snape's Mill on Nuns Green, the corporation mills behind St Michael's church and then onto the mills on the Holmes. A child was wounded in the marketplace when troops sent to defend the town fired into a crowd after a stone was thrown.[94] This riot was noteworthy enough to appear in the *London Evening Post* that month though they excused the rioters and put the blame

[90] *Derby Postman,* 17th August 1727.
[91] *Derby Mercury,* 10th July 1740; Randall, *Riotous Assemblies,* p. 25.
[92] Bohstedt, *Politics of Provisions*, p. 77.
[93] *Derby Mercury,* 27th August 1756.
[94] *Derby Mercury,* 10th September 1756.

squarely at the feet of William Evans, charging him with 'falsehoods' according to the *Mercury*. He was labelled an 'Engrosser of Corn and Oppressor of the Poor' and was accused of mixing non-food stuffs in the flour he produced, defending a mill only because he had a financial interest in it, assaulting a man, and ordering the troops to fire. Evans presented his rebuttal, sworn in front of a fellow justice, that not only did he not order the troops to fire, but he was also not even in the same part of town as them. As for assaulting a man, Evans claims that the man broke the peace after the riot act was read and was grabbed by a fellow justice. When the man attempted to headbutt his captor, the mayor struck him.[95]

Newspapers became an essential part of riots during this period as they could either enflame or soothe tensions, as seen above by the *Derby Mercury* and the *London Evening Post* commenting on the post-riot fall out. Towns such as Worcester, Manchester, Liverpool and Chester had pre-empted trouble by proclaiming in print the laws pertaining to illegal assembly, even when there was no hint of trouble.[96] The *Gloucester Journal* did not report at all on the riot of 1766 which affected the town but did report on a farmer having 13 ricks of wheat, hoping to sell at an inflated price. It did not actively seek to start a riot but wished to keep the readers aware of what they saw as unreasonable market behaviour.[97]

A similar riot to the 1756 flour riots was avoided in Derby in 1766 when rioters attacked a cheese warehouse at Cavendish Bridge, several miles southeast of the town. No doubt fearing a repeat of 1756, the mayor and the corporation met at the Town Hall to discuss options to keep the rioting away from the town whereby they decided to order those that had gathered to return to their homes or face disenfranchisement. The riots at Cavendish Bridge continued for 3-4 days, involving 300 men, women, and children, and causing up to £1000 damages, but it did not reach the town. Two justices of the peace, accompanied by a troop of light dragoons, rode out to meet the rioters at Shardlow where 30 were arrested and taken to the gaol.[98] Although we cannot be certain that the *Mercury* reported both riots completely, we can make claims about the differences in the response of the justices. For instance, the riots in 1756 happened

[95] *Derby Mercury,* 17th September 1756.
[96] Randall, *Riotous Assemblies,* pp. 115-6.
[97] Randall, *Riotous Assemblies, p. 13.*
[98] *Derby Mercury,* 19th October 1766.

within the town, even though the rioters were Peak lead miners, who had travelled a much longer distance than the rioters of 1766. This suggests that the justices learnt their lesson and sought to stop the riots at the source rather than waiting for them to enter the town. Also, the 1766 riot response included the threat made to burgesses to remain in their homes or risk disenfranchisement. The 1766 riot was dealt with much more swiftly and decisively and avoided the consequences experienced ten years earlier which fits with Stevenson's argument that the justices were responsible for whether violence broke out or not. Apart from an incident in 1792 when the windows of gentry houses were broken by a mob, there is no other mention of rioting in the town between 1766 and the end of the century even during national periods of food and political riots during that time.

The question needs to be asked as to why Derby did not experience riot during the national crises of 1795-6 and 1800-1. The reason for this appears to be that the town was one place where the urban elite strove to maintain prices and relieve the poor with a thoroughness that 'typified the age of improvement and active public sphere'.[99] The Derby Bread Committee had, by April 1795, exhausted the initial £500 raised to provide bread to the poor and another £500 was called for. By July 1795 they had raised £1300 but were still sending people door to door for subscriptions, such was the urgency to maintain the provision. The mayor and magistrates were actively vigilant against those who would damage the bread market and purchased a mill to grind corn to supply at a discount, those carrying certification from the parishes. In 1800, the Corporation reported that only a small quantity of corn had been brought to the market of late so requested that farmers bring more immediately under their protection whilst also raising a subscription to buy what corn was available. They advertised that they had fined a number of offenders for offences such as underselling, selling underweight, and selling loaves as wheaten bread when they were not, in an attempt to sway public opinion.[100] It will have also no doubt helped that there were three troops of volunteer

[99] Bohstedt, *Politics of Provisions*, pp. 212.
[100] *Derby Mercury,* 11th September 1800.

calvary and the 'Derby infantry' brought into town to protect the jail.[101] Thus Derby 'virtually escaped food riots in these dearths'.[102]

Conclusion

The avenues of power in Derby were as much based in law and finance, as they were in social position and political engagement. The professions, as relatively wealthy and educated members of the urban elite and as magistrates, were able to exert influence on wide areas of urban life. Lawyers and bankers were essential to the smooth running of urban affairs serving as clerks and treasurers on trusts and commissions. Also, providing they met the other stipulations of membership, lawyers and bankers could float to the top of the corporate hierarchy, filling the bench of aldermen and the mayoralty.

The most senior aldermen were automatically made justices of the peace, adding other powers to those gained through the corporation. Although these powers were not as extensive as those of justices in rural settings or unincorporated towns, they were still responsible for overseeing the roads, poor law, alehouses, and policing in the borough. As the first three of these were shared responsibilities with the parishes and corporation, maintaining the peace was their primary concern.

During periods of rioting, it was their judgement and actions that would determine whether the issue was solved or escalated, such as the 1766 cheese riots in Shardlow which was prevented from spreading to Derby by the actions of the justices. The approach to law and order from the urban gentry, as opposed to the rural gentry who only appeared during assizes, was different in that they had to inhabit the space that they were protecting. The constant reiteration of rules, typically not backed by law, shows attempts by the urban magistracy to control their surroundings to their liking rather than perhaps the greater good. For the upper classes, legal proceedings could be a source of celebration, reaffirming the ancient right of the assizes that denoted a county town, and giving an opportunity for the concentration of gentry in urban centres. The urban elite though had the primary role of governing Derby and the social changes

[101] Michael Thomas, 'The Rioting Crowd in Derbyshire in the 18th Century', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 95, 1975), p. 44.
[102] Bohstedt, *Politics of Provisions*, pp. 211-2.

in the make-up of the urban elite as described in chapter one coincides with an increased concern of that elite in the control of the urban space.

Almshouses and workhouses were central locations to house the poor, ran either on private or parish funding, and gave the benefactors and vestries further chance to exercise control over those receiving aid. There were attempts to use welfare as a force of improvement by not only restricting aid to those they felt worthy but also making sure they could be easily identified to ensure good behaviour through societal pressure by making them wear badges of identification and uniforms.[103] Although both institutions were clear attempts of trying to alleviate the suffering of the poor, they could be financially neglected.

The collision between secular and religious judgement also became an issue in how parishes dealt with the poor. Although both religious teachings and the law forced vestries to aid the needy, how the money was distributed and to whom were both decisions that involved as much politics as it did morality. Although they were working with public money, raised through assessment, the vestry had personal control over its use. They were able to determine who they saw as being worthy of help seeing opportunity to reward those who met their high criteria or attempting to mould those who did not into acceptable citizens. There is no evidence from the parish minute books referenced here that any decision of worthiness was challenged suggesting that either the criteria was fairly standard and accepted or that such challenges were left out of the minutes. Individual parish meeting attendees even had the chance to nominate those whom they felt were eligible to receive aid or be responsible for judging whether someone had broken the rules. Seldom was it a decision made even by the small number of vestry attendees let alone the parish as a whole and it is the parishes that this thesis turns.

[103] Hindle, 'Badging the Deserving Poor'.

Chapter 4: Religion and Society in Eighteenth-Century Derby

The religious affiliations of individuals and communities were manifest in terms of individual beliefs and behaviours but also at a social, structural, and institutional level in terms of congregations and organisations. Even with the rise of improvement commissions and the centralisation of corporation power, the parish remained the basis of local government and community.[1] Whilst the Anglican churches provided urban governance, local dissenter communities provided Derby's most prominent citizens. Those who occasionally conformed to enter the corporation and those who did not and pursued wealth through the professions or manufacturing were equally prosperous. This chapter will show how the roots of Derby's urban elite plus a large share of the borough's urban governance, both political and spatial, were found in religion. Sweet has argued that religion and secular authority were mutually supportive as the religious ceremonies associated with the mayoral elections in Derby demonstrate.[2] The parishes of Derby were responsible for much of the physical fabric of the town and were heavily linked with the corporation both through patronage and by offering the first foray into officialdom for many figures who would later be prominent in the corporation. They also had the responsibility of offering financial and spiritual aid to the lower classes. The dissenter churches on the other hand, provided many of the prominent citizens who would later form the core of the corporation, the economic life of the borough, and the improvement commissions. Members of families such as the Unitarian Strutts and the Presbyterian Cromptons, predominantly early in their rise to prominence, served in Anglican vestries before establishing dissenter communities in the town through the founding of meeting houses. The understanding of the spiritual and secular aspects of religion in eighteenth-century Derby is essential in discussions of the urban elite in the borough as the roots of improvement, professional and manufacturing success, and the relationships between the different layers of urban society can be found in the vestries and the dissenter chapels, which this chapter will show.

[1] Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: Science and Culture in British Urban Society 1700-1850* (Manchester: 2009), p. 115.
[2] Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society, and Culture* (New York: 1999), p. 208.

Although the corporation was the main political body in the borough, Derby was also split in to five parishes which were responsible for certain aspects of urban government. Recent historical studies of eighteenth-century religion have sought to bring Anglican England back into discussions of influences over town life where previously it had been ignored. Hempton has shown how the Church of England was 'an integral and indispensable part of the theory and practice of governing' whilst Barry has argued it is wrong to see the urban renaissance as secular and that religion was an aid to cultural improvement rather than a negative.[3] For Hempton, the church was 'intimately involved in the life of the community' through the 'uncontested monopoly over the rites of passage', welfare and education, religious literature and through 'identification with the political, legal, and social institutions of the State both at the centre and in the localities.'[4] Historians such as Walsh, Taylor, and Albers have also stressed the importance of religion to personal identity and that churches attracted powerful loyalties rather than being despised by neglected 'plebeian constituents' as had been the stereotype previously.[5] The idea of a religious community and the loyalties of the constituents is essential to this thesis as it helps to explain the level of involvement in religious life that could be expected in the parishes. Gibson has shown that strict membership to one church or religious sect is a nineteenth-century idea and that pluralism was common, whilst Albers argued that until the repeal of the test and corporations acts in 1787, religious divisions could be healed through joint action between parishes and religious sects, particularly through philanthropy.[6] That said, Hempton considers the loyalty to be based on cultural and communal identification and that church or religious traditions that set themselves against the 'economic, social, or political aspirations of their potential recruits' were unlikely to be successful suggesting,

[3] David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: 1996), p. 3; Jonathan Barry, 'Cultural Patronage and the Anglican Crisis: Bristol c.1689-1775' in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England 1689-1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 191.
[4] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 15.
[5] Jan Albers, '"Papists traitors" and "Presbyterian Rogues": Religious Identities in Eighteenth Century Lancashire' in Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England*, p. 320; John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, 'Introduction: the Church and Anglicanism in the 'Long' Eighteenth Century', in Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England, p. 27.*
[6] William Gibson, *Church, State, and Society, 1760-1850* (London: 1994), p. 84; Albers, 'Religious Identities', p. 331.

especially in urban scenarios such as Derby, that important local issues were more likely to endanger communication between religious groups than religious reasons.[7]

The strength of Anglican England in the eighteenth century has also been a particular focus of religious historians especially considering the supposed rise of dissenter communities at the same time. Walsh and Taylor saw that the close relationship between clergy and gentry at that time 'made the alliance of church and state more of a *social* [their italics] reality than at any other time since the middle ages'.[8] The role of the clergy, considered as one of the professions, also gained a greater importance in the eighteenth century as some were land owners and therefore involved in politics like other land owners.[9] In county towns they became important members of the urban elite, particularly if they were diocesan centres. In Derby, part of the Diocese of Lichfield and therefore without a large clerical presence, there were still important religious figures who entered the urban elite such as the Reverend Charles Hope (d. 1798) and his son Reverand Charles Stead Hope (1763-1841) who served as mayor five times.

The influence of the dissenters as individuals and as a collective has also been studied at length. Daniel Defoe, writing in 1712, saw a declining state of dissent whereas recent studies, such as that by Gibson, saw health in the life of dissent, at least by the 1750s.[10] As individuals, nonconformists have been linked with the economic prosperity of towns in this period with Sweet arguing that dissenter values were predominant in the 'rise' of the middling sorts whilst Mokyr has shown how although dissenters made up only 7% of the population, they made up 50% of manufacturing entrepreneurs.[11] In Derby, only one group of nonconformists was found residing in the borough at the beginning of the eighteenth century yet by the time of the Municipal Reform Act (1835), Presbyterians, Unitarians, and Congregationalists held prominent positions in the corporation.[12] Also, in line with Hempton's ideas on loyalty being based on communal identification, dissenters can also be found serving in the Derby parish vestries, particularly at the

[7] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture*, pp. 17 and 177.
[8] Walsh and Taylor, 'The Church and Anglicanism', p. 28.
[9] Gibson, *Church, State, and Society*, pp. 7-8.
[10] Gibson, *Church, State, and Society*, p. 88.
[11] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 189; Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: Britain and the Industrial Revolution* (London: 2009), p. 361.
[12] William Hutton, *The History of Derby*, second edition with additions by J.B. Nichols (London: 1817), p. 144; Catherine Glover and Philip Riden (eds.), *William Woolley's History of Derbyshire* (Chesterfield: 1981), p. 33; Elliot, *Derby Philosophers*, p. 9.

start of the century, possibly through a sense of community responsibility but also as prominent members of the parish, they were likely much needed.[13] As all residents of the parish paid tithes to the church, a sense of collective ownership may have induced them to attend, regardless of religious affiliation. Some dissenters were also at the centre of the philosophical societies of the late-eighteenth century and non-conformity has been closely linked with radicalism by historians such as Thompson, Watt, and Stevenson, of whom the latter found the links between religious and political freedom as a particular motivation.[14]

This chapter will demonstrate how religion, the Anglican church and the parish system shaped government and society in Georgian Derby. Firstly, it will show how the parishes and the corporation interacted and will look at the format of the parish vestry and the responsibilities they had as part of the shared system of urban government. The social make-up of the vestries will also be examined using the attendee lists of the various parishes and will show how although there was greater scope for inclusivity, attendance was limited to a core group reliant on the help from wealthy parishioners. The second section examines the controversy surrounding the re-building of All Saints' Church, arguing that the resulting power struggle between the corporation, the parish, and the vicar demonstrates divisions within the local oligarchy. It will also determine the place that church building held during Derby's urban renaissance. The final part of the chapter looks at the role of nonconformists within urban society and politics and how they were viewed both by themselves and by non-dissenters. As professionals and manufacturers, they were at the centre of Derby's economic and cultural prosperity and will be the predominant social group featuring in the rest of this essay.

Whilst Derby's corporation minutes do not survive from this period, there is no shortage of parish records from which to draw information. This chapter will utilise the available parish minutes of all five Derby parishes whilst also benefitting from the splinter groups involved in the distribution of poor relief or the regulation of the workhouses. This includes All Saints' parish minutes between 1722-1847 and the

[13] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 17; Mark Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic: Officeholding in Early Modern England', in Tim Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke: 2001), pp. 162-3.
[14] Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: 1991), p. 33; Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: 2020), pp. 369-70; John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1832*, second edition (New York: 1992), p. 174.

specialist workhouse committee minutes between 1731-1777; St Alkmund's vestry minutes from 1700-1822, St Werburgh's accounts and minutes of 1631-1723 and 1787-1865 plus various miscellaneous assessment and accounts reports often centred around a particular year or event. These sources, which have rarely been utilised by historians, cover the eighteenth century offering monthly attendance lists and details of meetings, demonstrating how the responsibilities of the parishes morphed over the century.

This chapter seeks to quantify the influence that religion had on urban governance and the physical landscape. The parishes shared responsibility for local government with the corporation and the improvement commissions usually requiring cooperation but also sometimes leading to conflict. Religion also helped to transform Derby's townscape as evidenced by the reconstruction of the town's premier church, All Saints'. Religion and welfare were as palpable forces in urban life as were trade, culture, and politics. Not only that, but the urban elite often started their political careers in the vestries, the social structure of which did not change in this period being made up primarily of traders and small manufacturers. Also, the interaction between the different dissenter groups and the Anglican church is essential to understanding how certain smaller religious groups produced such a large number of urban elites who dominated the cultural, political, and economic life of Derby.

Vestry Structure and the Opportunities for Openness

As has been shown in previous chapters, urban government was shared amongst multiple bodies. Parish vestries served as one such group with Derby having five separate parishes, which effectively carved the town into five separate administrative areas. This number was incidental and not governed by precedent as the large port of Portsmouth only had one parish whereas Norwich had 34 small parishes.[15] The vestries met on a regular basis, attended by the main citizens of the parish, and were responsible for the repair of the roads, the upkeep of fire-engines, and the collection and distribution of charitable bequests and poor rates. As the century progressed, acts of Parliament consolidated the responsibilities that dealt with urban renewal such as roads, lighting, and watching whilst vestries gained the task of managing workhouses.

[15] John Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns 1660-1722* (Oxford: 2007), p. 37.

The parish of All Saints was Derby's principal church, in that it was the largest and most important church in the county with connections to the corporation and the Cavendish family although references to the latter are completely absent from parish proceedings. The link with the corporation was more obvious due to both proximity and tradition. Every Sunday the corporation would process to the church to sit on the corporation pew, as was standard in many urban centres.[16] This was seen as part of the 'visible support for the established religion' required from the prominent members of the community which was underlined by the 'prominence of the pews'.[17] The corporation also had the responsibility of granting the living of All Saints' to a new clergyman once the position was vacated, offering the opportunity to exert a political influence over the Church. Every mayoral investiture included a procession from the Town Hall to the Church for divine service and then back again, thus reinforcing the physical and spiritual link between the religious and political presences in the town. On the feast of St Michael every year, when a new mayor was elected by the corporation, they announced his name on the steps of the Town Hall before processing to All Saints' church for a sermon.

Parish structures provided a variety of opportunities for parishioners to be involved in urban governance which were not, generally, found elsewhere. The three main positions that appear in most parish minutes are that of overseer of the poor, churchwarden, and surveyor of the highways. The former was involved in the collection of the poor rate and its distribution, which for St Alkmund's in 1772 came with a £14 per annum wage.[18] The churchwarden was required to monitor the upkeep of the church structure and treat with contractors regarding upgrades, rebuilding or changes to the fabric. Sometimes, as for the parish of All Saints in 1755, the role was simply to stop children playing ball in the churchyard.[19] These positions were held for a year (though multiple terms could be held non-consecutively) after which all office holders were to submit their accounts and either pay the excess to their successors or receive

[16] Mark Girouard, *The English Town* (New Haven: 1990), p. 24.
[17] Mark Smith, 'The Hanoverian Parish: Towards a New Agenda', in *Past & Present* (No 216, August 2012), p. 94.
[18] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 11th May 1772 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[19] *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1722-66*, 6th June 1755 (DRO M156 Vol 4).

reimbursement from the church as required. The surveyors of the highways looked after the roads of the parish and monitored those parishioners eligible for statute work which was an obligation to provide six days per year to mend the roads either themselves or through a replacement. All three of these positions gained their budget through separate assessments and therefore the vestry had three pots of money to draw funds from. This allowed for incidents where although a parish was out of money in one area, they could be quite affluent in others.[20]

The main offices within the churches were that of the clerk, the sexton, the bang beggar, and the master or mistress of the workhouse. The clerk was required to attend divine service and organise funerals, christenings and marriages whilst the sexton was responsible for chiming the bells as required, winding the clock, to get supplies, washing and caring for the vestments, care of basic expenses and for making graves.[21] In 1732, John Cockayne held both positions for St Alkmund's demonstrating that responsibilities could be combined, possibly when there were not enough eligible candidates.[22] The master or mistress of the workhouse was required to live in the workhouse and was chargeable for the care of the inhabitants. In 1786, St Alkmund's paid their master, Thomas Baker, 10 guineas for holding this office.[23] The bang beggar, the lowest office on the parish hierarchy, was responsible for monitoring the coming and going of the people in the parish and watching for any illegal residents. St Werburgh's parish in 1710 were paying their bang beggar 18d. a week with a gift of coal at Christmas before changing it to 12d a week and 6d weekly to support their family.[24] This after-the-fact change suggests that it was a lowly position that hardly made the occupier financially comfortable. All Saints' paid their bang beggar 1s. a week in 1744 and provided him with a coat and a staff for his business.[25]

Just like corporations, vestries had rules surrounding membership but there were fewer barriers in place. All those who paid the poor rate were eligible to serve and have a vote during vestry elections, leading them to be described as 'the most representative single

[20] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1783-1822* (DRO M167 Vol 3).
[21] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1783-1822* (DRO M167 Vol 3).
[22] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 6th December 1732 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[23] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1783-22*, 4th September 1786 (DRO M167 Vol 3).
[24] *St Werburgh's Churchwarden and Overseers of the Poor Accounts inc. Parish Minutes 1631-1723*, 2nd November 1710 and 4th December 1710 (DRO M173 Vol 4).
[25] *All Saints Workhouse Minute Book 1731-77*, 2nd July 1744 (DRO LD3372/132/1).

institution in the pre-twentieth-century state'.[26] Historians have identified vestries as the most visible source of officialdom to common people and this was still the case in Derby as the corporation, except during festivals and celebrations, remained closed off, due to law and custom, within the Town Hall.[27] Goldie estimates that in 1700, one out of every 20 people held a governing position within a parish with over 50% serving within a decade.[28] As with corporate membership, vestries were theoretically open to women who, as business or property owners, would be liable to pay the poor rate but they are absent from the parish minutes studied here except as receivers of poor law or as charitable benefactors.[29] In practice, attendance at the Derby parish meetings rarely rose above 30 and there was barely any rotation in attendees suggesting that an elite was still able to form and control proceedings due to the need for skills, finances and time commitment from the officials. One of the few examples of a vote amongst the wider pool of parishioners came with the election of a new sexton at All Saints' in 1769 where 103 votes were cast, a small percentage of the population of what was the largest Derby parish.[30] Vestry minutes are not a trustworthy source for information on parish elections as they 'deliberately downplayed any instances of disagreement'.[31] The only other example of vestry and parishioner cooperation was in the semi-regular 'pre-ambulation' where they would walk the outer limits of the parish to record the boundaries and watch for encroachments with entertainment being provided for attendees.[32]

It is difficult to confidently determine the trades, politics, and social standing of the attendees of Derby parish meetings though it is apparent that no one social group dominated proceedings. Politically, considering that not all attendees would have had the vote, there appears to have been an even mix between Whig and Tory. For St Alkmund's parish, for which there's a full run of minutes between 1700 and 1799, of around 250 total attendees in that period, 89 can be confidently identified in poll books of which 43 voted Whig and 46 voted Tory. For St Werburgh's parish between 1699 and

[26] David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London: 1997), p. 8.
[27] Eastwood, *Government and Community*, p. 47.
[28] Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic', p. 161.
[29] Tim Harris, 'Introduction' in Harris (ed.), *Politics of the Excluded*, p. 18.
[30] *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1766-47*, 8th August 1769 (DRO M156 Vol 5).
[31] Jonah Miller, 'Patricians, Plebeians and Parishioners: Parish Elections and Social Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Chelsea' in *Social History* (47:4, 2002), p. 374
[32] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 7th May 1770 (DRO M167 Vol 2).

1723, 46 of around 100 attendees are found in the poll books with 28 Whigs and 18 Tories. For the All Saints' workhouse committee of 1731-1777, of around 160 total attendees, 74 are in the poll books with 44 Whigs and 30 Tories. Considering that the top benches of the corporation were solidly Whig whilst the electorate was largely Tory, the vestries are quite notable for being politically mixed, offering an opportunity for Tories to influence urban government from outside the corporation.[33]

As well as being politically diverse, the vestry attendees for the three parishes mentioned above also show a wide cross-section of Derby's manufacturing and economic classes. The trades of the attendees of St Alkmund's parish that could be determined correlate with the chief economic outputs of the borough, that of brewing and the making of stockings, with the trades with the most representatives being stockingers, victuallers and maltsters. For All Saints', which covered the gentrified areas of the town, the chief trades represented are those of grocers, mercers, booksellers, and apothecaries with the making and selling of alcohol also being represented amongst the numerous trades. There is also a regular presence from those who would become aldermen. Around 40% of aldermen who served in the corporation in the eighteenth century appear in the list of attendees for one of these three parishes with some appearing in more than one parish vestry. On average there is a 10-to-20 year gap between the first appearance of an alderman on a vestry and their election as an alderman. For example, Isaac Borrow (1673-1745) first attended St Werburgh's vestry in 1711 and was elected alderman in 1730, Henry Flint (d. 1792) attended an All Saints' vestry meeting in 1752 and was elected in 1770, and John Hope (c.1730-1819) attended a St Alkmund's vestry meeting in 1760, 21 years before being elected alderman in 1781. It therefore appears that the vestries served as the first foray into urban politics for some of those who would later serve in the upper levels of the corporation.[34]

The parishes needed the wide participation of its parishioners to function, but most of these offices were unpaid and therefore it was sometimes difficult for them to find

[33] Poll Books for the Elections in 1701, 1710, 1748 and 1775 (DLSL BA324); *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83* (DRO M167 Vol 2); *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1783-22* (DRO M167 Vol 3); *All Saints Workhouse Minute Book 1731-77* (DRO LD3372/132/1); *St Werburgh's Churchwarden and Overseers of the Poor Accounts inc. Parish Minutes 1631-1723 (DRO M173 Vol 4).*

[34] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83* (DRO M167 Vol 2); *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1783-22* (DRO M167 Vol 3); *All Saints Workhouse Minute Book 1731-77* (DRO LD3372/132/1); *St Werburgh's Churchwarden and Overseers of the Poor Accounts inc. Parish Minutes 1631-1723 (DRO M173 Vol 4).*

volunteers although those who served could profit in other ways. Parishes had the ability to change tax rates and offer building contracts so a well-placed vote could be materially advantageous.[35] One such example from St Alkmund's parish meetings concerns Christopher Heath (1718-1815), the failed banker discussed in chapter three and a patron of local architect Joseph Pickford (1734-1782). He only attended one parish meeting which happened to be the one where Pickford was chosen to make structural changes to the church at a cost which was triple the average annual churchwarden expense.[36] This appears to be an exception to the rule argued by Goldie and Hempton that generally, involvement in the parish was regarded more as a duty than an opportunity for personal gain.

Religious Buildings and the Case of Dr Hutchinson

The parishes were required to care not only for the souls of their parishioners, but also the upkeep of their churches. Religious building work in the eighteenth century was focussed mostly on the new generation of dissenter meeting houses built in the aftermath of the Toleration Act of 1689 with comparatively few examples of Anglican Churches being built or re-built in this time. Derby experienced both with meeting houses becoming more common as the period progressed with 10 being built by 1843 and the re-building of the nave of All Saints' Church.[37] The latter is particularly noteworthy as both its destruction and rebuilding were part of a conflict between the vicar of All Saints', the vestry and parishioners, and the corporation, as to who had the power to make amendments to the church fabric and then over different ideas of how to raise the necessary money to rebuild. This episode highlights both the power struggles between the different forms of urban government but also demonstrates how the parish itself was managed. Hempton has emphasised the role that church building and reconstruction provided by offering 'continuity with the past (not least in the graveyard)', and a community 'focal point in the present and a heritage to be passed on to future generations.' A church was 'both a building to be cared for and a holy place to venerate; it was a place to ring bells and practise music' a place for the whole community meet 'with their best faces, and in their cleanest habits' and it was a place

[35] Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic', p. 165.
[36] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83,* 30th Mary 1774 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[37] Stephen Glover, *Glover's Derby* (Derby: 1992), p14.

where some detected the 'ancient soul of England itself'.[38] The building or re-building of churches and meeting houses could therefore invoke the passions which explains why it became as important to the urban renaissance as other improvements, shown by the use of classical designs and the positioning at the centre of typical Georgian streets and squares.

The rebuilding of the nave of All Saints' is the most notable incident of church rebuilding in Derby during this period. By 1720 it was in very poor condition and the parishioners were pushing for it to be replaced, something that was prevented by the corporation, the stewards of the building, according to the vicar Dr Michael Hutchinson (1676-1740) who had been made minister by the corporation in 1719.[39] The corporation on the other hand were blaming the parish for dragging its feet over the rebuilding. Eventually, Dr Hutchinson took the initiative and, with a party of builders, dismantled the nave in one night, though he had no plan on what to do next.[40] Most local histories, both contemporary and modern, have lauded Hutchinson for this act, and the fact that he managed to raise around £3250 from 580 subscribers, even travelling to London to appeal to prosperous merchant, Thomas Chambers (1660-1726), who had a house in Derby, and attracting such names as Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745).[41] The remaining amount was to be raised by selling pews and grave space.[42] The corporation, who were patrons of the church, however, were unhappy with the behaviour of Hutchinson and did everything they could to obstruct his efforts. The mayor justified their approach by publishing a vindication in 1728 after the mayor saw corporation members confronted with insults over the matter.[43] The corporation claimed a right over the chancel, the part of the church that was removed, and although they acknowledged the merits of the new building, the fact Hutchinson did not consult them nor the vestry before going ahead, was a cause for concern. Another

[38] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture*, p. 17.
[39] John Charles Cox and William Henry St. John Hope, *The Chronicles of the Collegiate Church or Free Chapel of All Saints, Derby* (London: 1881); Christopher Chalklin, 'The Financing of Church Building in the Provincial Towns of Eighteenth-Century England', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (London: 1985), p. 300; Bridges, *Cathedral Church of All Saints*, p. 23.
[40] Bridges, *Cathedral Church of All Saints,* pp. 23-4.
[41] Bridges, *Cathedral Church of All Saints*, p. 25.
[42] Stephen Glover, *Glover's Derby*, facsimile edition of 1849 publication (Derby: Breedon Books, 1992), p. 18.
[43] *A Review of the Proceedings of the Corporation of Derby relating to Doctor Hutchinson, Derby, Printed by Sam. Hodgkinson, and Henry Allestree, bookseller*, 1728 (DLSL 5317), p. 3.

cause of contention was in the way Hutchinson had raised the money to cover the cost. He had insisted on selling seats within the church which went against the parish's usual practice of 'Liberty of Sitting'. All Saints' did not sell its pews up to this point due to an issue with a John Osborne who had bought three seats for £20 and had then complained about 'Lesser persons' sitting near him. He then refused to repair the seats he was only 'renting'.[44] An agreement was reached which set aside only some of the seats for sale though later the corporation complained that the best families had been left out of the best 40 seats which were 'not placed according to their Rank'.[45] This incident highlights how intertwined the responsibilities of the parish and the corporation were as the former controlled the building whilst the later controlled its use, thus becoming a source of friction. Hutchinson placed himself firmly between this friction condemning the corporation for 'Violence, and Usurpation by Arbitrary Power, contrary to Law, and the indisputable Rights of others' whereas the corporation labelled parish meetings as 'the never-failing source of Debate and Contradiction.'[46]

The arguments over the selling of pews to raise funds brought up wider issues regarding the hegemony of the upper classes within church buildings. The selling of pews though was common practice in the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Anglican Church, treated as just another property transaction.[47] In Derby, advertisements in the *Derby Mercury* regarding the sale of property often included references to the transfer of seats in the parish church being part of the agreement. The church pew or seat was an important part of the offer as the advertisement tended to expand on the detail regarding the situation of the seat to make it more desirable. For example the lawyer, Erasmus Darwin (1759-1799), when letting a house on Full Street in 1789, added to the listing a pew in All Saints' for four to five people.[48] A large house at the corner of St Mary's Gate was for sale in 1785 alongside a pew in the same church which sat six people.[49] The location within the church was also deemed important as shown by the actions of 'Mr Bingham', who, in 1786, let a pew in the middle isle of All

[44] Bridges, *Cathedral Church of All Saints*, p. 25.
[45] *A Review of the Proceedings of the Corporation of Derby Relating to Doctor Hutchinson, Derby, Printed by Samuel Hodgkinson, and Henry Allestree, Bookseller, 1728* (DLSL5317), pp. 3 and 12.
[46] *A Review of the Proceedings of the Corporation of Derby Relating to Doctor Hutchinson, Derby, Printed by Samuel Hodgkinson, and Henry Allestree, Bookseller, 1728* (DLSL5317), pp. 4 and 17.
[47] Chalklin, 'The Financing of Church Building', p. 288 and 291; Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689-1798* (Oxford: 1994), p. 21.
[48] *Derby Mercury,* 10th September 1789.
[49] *Derby Mercury,* 22 December 1785.

Saints' near the reading desk.[50] The advertisement for another house in St Mary's Gate for sale in 1785 emphasised that the sale came with 'ONE OF THE BEST PEWS' [their capitalisation] in All Saints'.[51] In 1794, St Werburgh's constructed an entirely new gallery and advertised those seats in a similar way to how Hutchinson had been condemned for doing earlier in the century, by offering seats to the highest bidder.[52] The sale of seats also appear several times in the parish minute books such as when the clockmaker and mechanic, John Whitehurst (1713-1788), purchased a seat in All Saints in 1770, and Michael Dobinson (d. 1792), a wharfinger, and Lewis Latuffiere (c.1735-1808), a dancing master, constructed or extended their pews in St Alkmund's in 1781 and 1778 respectively.[53] Pews that had been rented or purchased were strictly off limits to anyone but the purchasers and their family, even if the family failed to attend a service when the seat remained empty. If enough seat owners failed to turn up, the church could be half empty. Thomas Coke (1700-1776) in 1753, who had a seat in St Alkmund's, was told by the parish that unless he or his family came to live in the parish, his seat would become free.[54] As more than a quarter of parishes in Derbyshire had no free seating for the poor, empty churches became a problem which helped drive people towards the dissenting congregations.[55]

The increase in nonconformist communities led to the most widespread trend of religious building in the period with dissenter chapels, and meeting houses becoming more prominent in urban centres. The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed for dissenter congregations to build meeting places at a time when the nonconformist community was growing within what O'Gorman has termed a religious 'free market'.[56] These new buildings were built in a very different style. For Anglican churches, the theme was visibility, but for dissenters, often targeted in riots and disturbances, the theme was 'quiet and self-effacing structures' to avoid attention.[57] Also, unlike All Saints' which required subscriptions from its congregation to pay for a rebuild, the dissenter churches

[50] *Derby Mercury,* 9th March 1786.
[51] *Derby Mercury,* 28th July 1785.
[52] *Derby Mercury*, 14th August 1794.
[53] *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1766-47*, 23rd May 1770 (DRO M156 Vol 5); *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 2nd July 1781 and 23rd March 1778 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[54] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 13th April 1753 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[55] John V. Beckett, Margery Tranter, Wendy Bateman (eds.), *Visitation Returns from the Archdeaconry of Derby, 1718-1824* (Chesterfield: 2003), p. xviii.
[56] O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, p. 35.
[57] Michael Reed, *The Georgian Triumph 1700-1830* (London: 1983), p. 197.

of Derby were often paid for by a wealthy town figure. Wooley, writing in 1717, noted only one dissenter place of worship existing in the borough and that was the Presbyterian meeting house on Friargate.[58] Hutton, writing in the 1791, emphasised that half a century before this that the people of Derby 'strenuous for the church' would not allow dissenter houses to exist but by his time, three had been built; a Presbyterian meeting house, which was built in 1690, an Independent chapel and a Methodist chapel.[59] The Presbyterian chapel was built by its chief benefactor Abraham Crompton, founder of the Derby banking dynasty.[60] Previously, this congregation had met in St Mary's Bridge chapel and then in a wide yard off the marketplace.[61] Glover described it as a 'plain brick building' in 1830, an identical description to the Independent Chapel on the Brookside. It later became Unitarian when it was taken over by Jedidiah Strutt (1726-1844).[62] The Methodist chapel was built in St Michael's lane and was opened by John Wesley (1703-1791) in 1765 who also preached there in 1777, 1782, 1783, 1788 and 1790 whilst Methodists remained within the Anglican communion during the lifetime of Wesley.[63] Unfortunately, only 12 years after the construction of the Derby chapel, the roof fell in only 30 minutes before a meeting started.[64] The Independent chapel in Brookside opened in 1784 to 'Friends of Freedom & Religion', after a part of the congregation at the Friargate chapel had seceded, and was also paid for by a single person, Thomas Wilson (1731-1794).[65] A Baptist meeting house opened on Nuns Green in 1794 as part of the newly built streets and building that resulted from the enclosure of the land in 1792.[66]

Although dissent as a collection of religious groups will be discussed later in the chapter, the history of nonconformist religious building follows a different approach to the Anglican church maintenance and construction which highlights the differences between congregations in Derby. The re-building of All Saints' was one of the few

[58] Glover and Riden, *Woolley's History of Derbyshire*, p. 33.
[59] Hutton, *History of Derby*, p. 139.
[60] Stephen Orchard, *Nonconformity in Derbyshire: A Study in Dissent, 1600-1800* (Milton Keynes: 2009), p. 80.
[61] Robert Simpson, *History and Antiquities of Derby,* Vol 1 (Derby: 1826), p. 428.
[62] Maxwell Craven, *Derbeians of Distinction* (Derby: 1998), p. 179.
[63] *Derby Mercury,* 22nd May 1765, 13th June 1777, 4th July 1782, 22nd May 1783, 24th July 1788 and 8th July 1790.
[64] *Derby Mercury,* 28th March 1777.
[65] Glover, *Glover's Derby*, p. 29 and Simpson, *History and Antiquities of Derby*, p. 436; *Derby Mercury,* 12th Aug 1784; Hutton, *History of Derby*, p. 141.
[66] *Derby Mercury,* 5th June 1794.

examples of extensive changes to an Anglican church which was actioned solely by the vicar and the vestry whereas the building of dissenter chapels depended on the strength of the religious community particularly the more well-off members. Although, taken in isolation, church building in this period does not directly demonstrate the relative strength of the various Derby religious communities through time, it is notable that there was a sudden increase in the number of nonconformist places of worship later in the eighteenth century.

The Dissenting Experience in Derby

This chapter has so far looked at how the Anglican church served as a governing entity, serving both the secular and spiritual needs of its parishioners and the town as a whole. Dissenting chapels, on the other hand, did not have responsibilities in governing urban space yet produced the members of the urban elite who would be most influential in the town's politics, culture, and economy by the end of the eighteenth century. Dissenters have often been seen as one of the most distinctive and innovative elements of the Georgian urban middling sorts. Historians have linked nonconformist values of the individual with middling sorts values of 'thrift, industry, independence, [and] opposition to privilege' and have also put the dissenting characteristics of frugality and self-reliance as central to that of the entrepreneur.[67] This section will show how although they were present in Derby's urban society at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the influence of nonconformists increased during the period. Many dissenters circumvented civil restrictions they faced by also attending Anglican churches, holding offices in the corporation and achieving success in trade, manufactures or the professions which gave them equal or more influence in the town than Anglicans.

It is important to note that terms such as dissenter and nonconformist only existed due to their use by an opposition. As Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) wrote in 1771, dissenters 'as such, have nothing in common but a Dissent from the Established Church, and it by no means follows that they, therefore, agree in anything else.' Albers adds that 'the notion of a "Dissenting community" is often more apparent in retrospect than it was to

[67] Sweet, *English Town*, p. 189; Brian A. Holderness, *Pre-Industrial England: Economy and Society from 1500-1750* (London: 1976), p. 164.

contemporaries.'[68] This umbrella term covers during the eighteenth century, Presbyterians, Quakers, Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists, with other groups added as the century progressed and factions split or developed. It is mostly likely that Anglicans and Dissenters 'did not see themselves as separate and discrete' and that previous studies of the Dissenter experience have exaggerated divisions.'[69] Even High Churchman could concede that 'Dissent was intimately connected to the church' and that dissenters could enjoy an 'occasional relationship with the church.'[70] A series of parliamentary acts at the end of the seventeenth century were proposed to establish the relationship between these different Protestant strands and support the authority and income of the Anglican Church. The Test and Corporation Acts (passed in 1673 and 1661 respectively) barred from public office those unwilling to conform by their 'refusal to accept the patterns of worship laid down by the liturgy of the Church of England.'[71] The Toleration Act of 1689 granted dissenters the freedom of worship subject to the acceptance of certain oaths of allegiance. Daniel Finch (1647-1730), 2nd Earl of Nottingham, attempted to pair the Toleration Act with a Comprehension Bill, which would 'leave Presbyterians and some Independents within the Church of England, leaving the Toleration Act for the sectarian few' by allowing 'the Admission of all Protestants that are willing and able to serve' in public office.[72] Although disappointed by the failure of Comprehension, Presbyterians were already accustomed to occasional conformity 'out of conscience' rather than a 'late Invention of craft men to get into Places'.[73]

Presbyterians were the 'wealthiest, most influential, and most articulately vocal denomination' posing a greater challenge to the established order than the other dissenter sects and they therefore attracted a great proportion of vitriol.[74] As we have noted in Derby, the wealthiest and most influential Presbyterians were the Crompton banking family. During the enclosure debates of the 1790s, Samuel Crompton's III (1750-1810) religion was often a target of scorn with one such detractor including

[68] Albers, 'Religious Identities', pp. 322-3.
[69] William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord* (London: 2001), p. 1.
[70] Gibson, *Church of England,* p. 196.
[71] Donald A. Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger: Parsons and Parishioners, 1660-1740* (Cambridge: 2000), p. 155.
[72] Ashley Walsh, 'The Decline of Comprehension in the Church of England, 1689-1750', in *Journal of British Studies* (61:3, 2022), pp. 703 and 711.
[73] Walsh, 'Decline of Comprehension', p. 713.
[74] Albers, 'Religious Identities', p. 322.

'Hypocrisy and Ambition', 'Flower of formality', 'Spirit of Pride', 'seeds of contention, stubbornness, and contempt', a 'Brimstone fire of feigned zeal, without godliness', and a 'syrup of self-conceit' as the 'Genuine Receipt' for making a 'Presbyterian in Two Days'.[75] The Presbyterians split during the 1790s with most becoming Unitarian under Rev. James Pilkington and taking over the Friargate chapel.[76] The Unitarian church has been considered the most active, enterprising and, intellectually, the most radical sect of dissenters drawing their membership from the wealthy merchant, professional, and manufacturing class.[77] This, plus their belief that 'truth mattered supremely', explains why they came be strongly represented in many literary and philosophical societies and urban improvement commissions, with Derby being no different.[78] The most famous local figures of the latter part of this period, such as the Strutts, Foxes, Drewrys, and the Leapers were all listed as Unitarian church attendees.[79] There were also Baptist, Methodist, and Quaker meeting houses in the town, plus a handful of Catholics (who were classed as recusants rather than dissenters, and were subject to similar barriers).

The number of dissenters in Derby at any one time during the long eighteenth century is difficult to ascertain with only two records from this period recording the number of non-Anglicans, in 1676 and 1772. The 1676 record was part of the Compton census which asked for the number of those who 'obstinately refuse[d]' to conform which 'probably omitted those partial conformists'.[80] In total in Derby there were 2,014 conformists, 4 papists, and 101 nonconformists.[81] The 1772 record was a visitation response from four out of the five parishes (unfortunately a response from All Saints', the largest parish, is missing). Amongst the various questions, the parish ministers were asked for the number of 'papists', Quakers, Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Methodists and Moravians, their rank and influence in the parish and whether they held meetings. From these responses we can go some way to determine the size of the non-

[75] *A Genuine Receipt for the make a Presbyterian in Two Days*, undated (DLSL Parcel 202).
[76] Raymond Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England*, second revised edition (London: 1952), p. 13.
[77] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 66; Holt, *Unitarian Contribution*, p. 216.
[78] Roy Porter, 'Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England', in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (New York, 1995), p. 263; Holt, *Unitarian Contribution*, p. 16 and 24.
[79] John E. Heath, 'The Borough of Derby between 1780 & 1810' in *Derbyshire Miscellany* (Vol 8 pt 6, Autumn 1979), p. 194.
[80] Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger*, p. 170.
[81] J. Charles Cox, 'A Religious Census of Derbyshire, 1676', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 7, 1885), pp. 34-5.

Anglican community in Derby in 1772, when the town's urban renaissance was under way. Only one parish, St Peter's, reported having Catholics within their boundaries amounting to one and a half families (a catholic woman was married to a Protestant) being resident in the town. Reverend Thomas Manlove (1729-1802) of St Alkmund's, a parish containing 'many families of good substance', reported six families of Presbyterians, made up of 'people in trade', as being resident, a number which had grown in the preceding years. The parish also contained 'some few families who are Methodists' but whose numbers 'are lessened of late'. St Michael's, the smallest parish in the town 'consisting of Tradesmen's houses' and 'many poor people', did not report any dissenter families though did contain the Methodist Meeting house at which town and country Methodists met once a week. St Peter's, like the other parishes, contained 'no Quakers, Independents, Anabaptists, or Moravians', but had the families of papists mentioned above, four families of Presbyterians and one family of Methodists. These numbers in 1772 were 'much the same that it has been for some years past'. The final parish for which these statistics appear was St Werburgh's which contained the largest dissenter community of any parish in the town. John Seale, the vicar, reported 15 families of Presbyterians, including prominent figures such as Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782), Dr Snowden White (d. 1775), Gilbert Fox (c.1711-1782) and John Bingham (d. 1819), who were all listed at the start of the visitation as 'Persons of Note in the Parish'. Seale also noted that the number of Presbyterian families had not increased in the preceding years.[82] The numbers of nonconformists, predominantly Presbyterians, was therefore apparently stagnant in the years between 1676 and 1772 and does not appear to have advanced much from the 'one small congregation of Dissenters' described by Hutton as being resident in the borough between 1714-1726, of which he was a member.[83] The influx of dissenters characterised by the building of meeting houses described earlier in the chapter was therefore a late-eighteenth-century event.

A new group of important dissenting figures came through trade and manufacturing in Derby, the most prominent of whom were the Unitarian Strutts. Jedidiah Strutt, the founder of the family fortune, was born in South Normanton and educated at the

[82] Beckett, Tranter, and Bateman (eds.), *Visitation Returns*, pp. 92-8.
[83] Hutton, *History of Derby*, p. 114.

Findern dissenting academy on the outskirts of Derby before starting his business in Nottingham and then moving to Derby to set up a Silk Mill. His wealth arose from the creation of the Derby rib which was an attachment to a stocking frame to knit ribbed stockings, developed alongside his business partner and brother-in-law William Woollatt. As many of their family letters survive, a picture of how Jedidiah's religious beliefs affected his business can be formed alongside the upbringing of his children including William (1756-1830) and Joseph (1765-1844) who would go on to lead Derby's urban transformation in the late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth centuries. Jedidiah saw education as a route for his children to better their social position.[84] Their home life was one of 'frugality, obedience, and moral and intellectual discipline' all striving towards developing an emphasis on 'improvement' which would become the legacy of William and Joseph.[85] These lessons appear to have had their effect as in a letter to his mother before her death in 1774, William wrote: 'let my actions & conduct witness the sincerity of my resolutions to please you & to conform to everything that is Virtuous & Praiseworthy.'[86] The Strutts became renowned for acknowledging the health and welfare of their work force, drawing on this legacy of improvement to create housing for their workers that was generally of a superior standard. It was not just the physical health of their workers they took notice of but their spiritual health. The Strutts were Presbyterian and became Unitarian, the religious affiliation tolerant of the religious beliefs of others, yet they encouraged Methodism amongst their work force due to its beneficial paternalism and no doubt its acceptance of the established order.'[87] The Strutts then were able to unite the beneficial trading position experienced by the middling sorts, becoming prominent manufacturers whilst also staying true to their dissenting beliefs which stimulated a genuine, if paternalistic, concern for their workers.

By the end of the eighteenth century, nonconformists in Derby, principally Presbyterians and Unitarians, were the strongest they had been, with a leading presence in the corporation and improvement commissions whilst also forming a large

[84] C.L. Hacker, 'William Strutt of Derby 1756-1830', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 80, 1960), p. 51.
[85] Robert S. Fitton and Alfred P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and The Arkwrights* (Manchester: 1958), p. 109.
[86] Fitton and Wadsworth, *The Strutts and The Arkwrights*, p. 127.
[87] Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture,* p. 34.

part of the economic, manufacturing, and professional groups holding the most influence in the borough.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the corporation and the Anglican church were equally important for urban governance. In religious terms, the corporation served as patrons for the main Anglican church in the town, All Saints', and used religious ritual and tradition to maintain the ceremonial links between the spiritual and the secular. Although barred by both the corporation and the vestries, either by convention or law, dissenters became integral members of both in Derby thus highlighting that the governing of urban space was more important than enforcing religious hegemony.

Where vestries were different to other bodies was that day to day running of the parish was invested in humbler men who served as overseers, surveyors, and wardens. Although their remit was limited, it gave a lower class of townsman an experience of political life they could not experience elsewhere. Payment of the poor rate enabled individuals to hold one of the many parish positions and attend vestry meetings, though in practice, the wider parish was called upon only for specific votes when the core vestry were unable to decide matters on their own. As with other areas of eighteenth-century urban life, vestries required the participation of the principal members of society both as a source of financial aid and legal and economic knowledge when it was required. The men who served most often in parish meetings were therefore the same men who served in the corporation and the improvement commissions as the skills they possessed were required in all areas of urban government.

Although it would be incorrect to say that the physical manifestations of corporate power, such as town halls, were understated, it is true that they pale in comparison to church buildings. The grand towers, wide naves, and graveyards created a physical representation of the Church's influence over the lives of their parishioners and although originally this was a religious authority, church building and re-building in the eighteenth century also acknowledged the administrative influence they possessed. The arguments surrounding the destruction of part of All Saints' and its subsequent rebuilding highlight that the matter was not simply a religious issue but a political one too. Not only was the responsibility of the upkeep of the church debated by the vestry,

corporation, and vicar, but issues over the method in which the money was raised came to the fore. The vicar appealed to rich parishioners to donate and buy pews, showing how the parishes required elite support to run. The parishioners, on the other hand, saw the church as a collectively owned enterprise and sought to ensure the rights of all parishioners to attend services showing how secular and religious judgement could overlap.

Dissenters, legally barred from holding local government office in theory, though often not in practice, were found serving in the vestries. This success and influence often came from being barred from such offices, giving them the opportunity to focus on the accumulation of wealth and trade. The most successful figures, such as the Cromptons and Strutts, were able to straddle both camps, serving in public office through occasional conformity whilst also utilising their religious education to be successful in business and the professions. By the end of the century dissenters were a palpable force in Derby's urban elite more in financial and political authority rather than in sheer numbers. As core members of Derby's trading and manufacturing elite, they were instrumental in the physical changes experienced by Derby in the eighteenth century as the town extended its commercial and communication links, to which this thesis turns now.

Chapter 5: Derby and the East Midlands Commercial Network

Georgian towns became more connected with each other through improved roads and water navigations creating a communications network along which people, trade, news, and materials flowed. These connections were of primary importance to urban growth and development and were based on town function, location and the different characteristics of local trades, markets and industries. The impact of growth and development in trades and manufactories is evident in the improvement projects designed to increase the strength of urban economies, leading to areas of towns becoming manufacturing and trading centres such as in Derby at the wharf area where the Derby Canal met the River Derwent. This chapter will show how improvement projects dealing with commerce and communication, such as water navigations, plus controls placed over the markets by the guild and the corporation, led to eighteenth-century economic growth in Derby which helped drive the local urban renaissance. Improvements also increased the wealth of the urban elite, made up of manufacturers and professionals, who usually supported these improvements and were the primary beneficiaries. Derby by the end of the century was a manufacturing town, strongly linked with its agricultural hinterland and with a strong service industry which catered for the immediate area, all of which were fed by the commercial and communication improvements in the town during the eighteenth century.

Trade guilds, such as Derby's Company of Mercers, had a responsibility for regulating the market. Guilds could restrict trade to members, much like corporations with freeman status, and had the right to maintain quality and regulations. Often these powers were transferred to the corporation as guilds became overwhelmed by the growth and diversification of trade and industry, a process experienced by Derby in the eighteenth century. Sometimes the lack of a corporation regulating the local economy was believed to have stimulated industrial development as at Birmingham and Manchester, and in some incorporated towns such as York the relatively closed nature of trade caused 'slow economic self-strangulation.'[1] However at Derby, as this chapter argues, through the operation of its corporation and town guild and its relatively

[1] John Patten, *English Towns 1500-1700* (Folkestone: 1978), p. 83.

permeable and adaptable nature, the local elite helped to stimulate economic growth and industrialisation in the town and county through communication improvements and its regulation of the markets.

The East Midlands is a relatively unique region in the study of eighteenth-century urban growth in England for two reasons. Firstly, it was the only region where the county towns experienced growth during this period with Derby, Leicester and Nottingham having 'increasing prosperity and continuing economic dominance' which had 'no parallel elsewhere in industrializing Britain.'[2] Secondly, unlike Manchester for the North-west and Birmingham for the West Midlands, no one town dominated the region which hampered the creation of a strong regional identity and led to weak urbanisation in the rest of their respective counties, but made sure that the three county towns prospered.[3] This was due to each town having its own strengths, hosiery in Nottingham and Leicester, silk weaving in Derby, whilst being sufficiently far away from each other for one to become dominant.[4] That said, there were still rivalries between them particularly regarding improvements to trade routes such as river navigations and canals.

This chapter will start by analysing the processes that led to the creation of the Derwent Navigation in 1719 and the Derby Canal in 1793, two events in which a small number of urban elites sought to improve commercial links to the town in the face of opposition from both within the town and without. Derby was dependent on water for its economic prosperity both for the transport of goods but also fuelling its industry. Beckett has emphasised how the rural nobility were heavily involved in turnpikes due to them being the 'king's highway' and as Justices and landowners but not in canals which they saw only for the mercantile class.[5] However, this chapter will argue that in Derby, the

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[2] Joyce Ellis, 'Industrial and Urban Growth, 1680-1840', in Jon Stobart and Neil Raven (eds.), *Towns, Regions and Industries: Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands, c.1700-1840* (Manchester: 2008), p. 147; Claire Townsend, 'County Versus Region? Migrational Connections in the East Midlands, 1700-1830', in *Journal of Historical Geography* (32:3, April 2006), p. 295; John Langton, 'Town Growth and Urbanisation in the Midlands from the 1660s to 1841', in Penelope Lane and John Stobart (eds.), *Urban and Industrial Change in the Midlands 1700-1840* (Leicester: 2000), p. 108.

[3] Townsend, 'County Versus Region?', pp. 292 and 294-5; Joyce Ellis, '"The Stocking County': Industrial and Urban Growth in Nottingham 1680-1840', in Lane and Stobart (eds.), *Urban and Industrial Change*, p. 35.

[4] Alan Dyer, 'Area Surveys 1540-1840: Midlands', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Vol 2 1540-1840* (Cambridge: 2000), p. 103; Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford: 1989), pp. 7-8

[5] John V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914* (Oxford: 1989), p. 239.

opposite was true as the influence of the rural nobility was found more in the Derby Canal Committee. This chapter will also look at how these communication and commercial links boosted the town's economy through an increase in bulk trade but will also show how the major borough industries of brewing, silk production, and pottery either predated or were unaffected by these 'improvements' suggesting two separate lobbying groups within Derby's urban elite. The final section will look at the importance of Derby's market and trading industries and how it was 'controlled' firstly by the Company of Mercers until the 1730s and then the corporation as the two became indistinguishable. The purpose of this chapter is to track the industrial changes that happened in Derby during the eighteenth century, to determine from which area of urban society the primary force for commercial change came from and which groups this change ultimately benefitted. It will argue that the corporation, the company of mercers, the urban elite, and the rural nobility all took part in industrial growth in the borough although they could often be divided on how it would be achieved.

The Derby Waterways

Waterways were essential to the location and prosperity of towns from the earliest times as transport routes for raw materials for domestic and commercial use (for example in brewing), travel connections and as a power source. Slow water was essential for trade whereas fast water was essential for manufacturing so a town that had ready access to both, such as Derby, sited on the fast flowing River Derwent and bisected by the slow moving Markeaton Brook, was more likely to flourish.[6] Sir Robert Southwell estimated in 1675 that transporting goods over land cost 12 times as much as transporting by inland waterways so water connections .[7] Several attempts were made to alter the River Derwent to facilitate trade to and from Derby after 1690, and the river was made fully navigable to the south between the town and the Trent in 1720.[8] The height of national canal building has been placed in the 1790s as the profits for the earliest projects began to rise, and in 1793 the Derby canal connected the town to the Erewash and Grand Trunk canals. The improvements in river navigations were delayed

[6] Mark Girouard, *The English Town* (New Haven: 1990), pp. 34-5.
[7] Edward A. Wrigley, 'Urban Growth in Early Modern England: Food, Fuel and Transport', in *Past & Present* (Vol 225, 2014), p. 89.
[8] Girouard, *The English Town*, p. 36.

by opposition from Nottingham who benefitted from controlling traffic on the Trent and other markets and trading hubs in the region that would have been bypassed by the new projects. However, there was also opposition from factions within Derby who saw the benefits as limited to certain borough traders at the expense of others. This section will show how improvements to Derby's waterways did not represent a united approach to commercial and communication improvements from all the borough's trades and traders but instead were led by small factions with support from the rural nobility in the face of local and national opposition.

Navigation of the River Derwent had been a right of the freeman of Derby from the first charter of King John in 1204, but the right had been lost for 'want of continuance'.[9] By the end of the seventeenth century the transport of raw materials such as lead, iron, and mill-stones, plus the wider availability of grain, butter, and cheese, had outgrown the old roads. The intention was that the Derwent Navigation would enable the town to expand as a trading post between North Derbyshire and the Trent.[10] The first proposals in 1690 were supported by towns including Chester, Stafford, Lichfield, and Birmingham, and merchants, ironmongers, and cheesemongers in London, but the main opponent, Nottingham, was able to effectively prevent it. The Nottingham corporation and burgesses were intent on blocking any navigation proposal from the west of their town and when one surfaced, money was raised to petition parliament to oppose it, as in 1696.[11] Nottingham was also in a position to physically block traffic on the Trent every time a bill surfaced to improve the Trent, Derwent, or Soar, as occurred in 1698, in order to ensure their continuing importance as a river port.[12]

Opposition to the Derwent navigation also came from within Derby. A bid proposed in 1696 was opposed by the burgesses who complained that the majority of them made a living from the land-carriage of commodities and that farmers in the area would not be able to beat the prices of corn brought in via the river and therefore would be forced to

[9] F. Williamson, 'George Sorocold: Pioneer of Water Supply', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 57, 1936), p. 52.
[10] Charles Hadfield, *The Canals of The East Midlands*, 3rd ed. (London: 1981), p. 32.
[11] John V. Beckett, *The East Midlands From AD 1000* (London: 1988), p. 149.
[12] Duncan Gray, *Nottingham through 500 years: A History of Town Government* (Nottingham: 1960), p. 114; Hadfield, *Canals of the East Midlands*, p. 32.

take their business elsewhere.[13] A similar complaint was made by the burgesses in 1716 when a petition stated that 'a few maulsters and petty chapman of Derby who mind more their own private gain than the general good of the town' were the only ones who wanted navigation, and the burgesses pleaded that 'the Town of Derby be not its own Ruin.'[14] The backers of the act, primarily the mayor and associated urban elites, sought aristocratic backing in a letter to Thomas Parker (1666-1732), Earl of Macclesfield, asking for his approval, plus for him to petition those gentry with land beside the river. This was to no avail as again the project was rejected.[15]

The run up to the successful bid in 1720 involved a lengthy negotiation between Nottingham and Derby with Nottingham claiming the act's sole purpose was to 'enrich and aggrandize a few private persons in the borough of Derby who would endeavour to monopolise trade to the ruin of others.'[16] Nottingham's main fear, as it had been 30 years previously, was the equal distribution of market produce. Nottingham felt that the navigation of the Derwent would mean that all corn in the area would be taken to Derby, that those who bought coal with corn would no longer be able to buy from Derby as there would be a surplus of corn, and that it would allow monopolies for traders who could take advantage of the quicker and cheaper transport opportunities that the navigation allowed. The proponents of navigation in Derby countered this by conceding that Nottingham's markets were much better and therefore were unlikely to lose trade, that as trade increased, so would the need for corn, and as Nottingham had more traders, the Derby traders would not be able to dictate prices, and in fact it would allow greater benefit to the towns surrounding Derby.[17] The second concern from Nottingham was built around the existing infrastructure. Derwent bridge was receiving tolls at this time but would be by-passed by the new navigation and would miss out on income. The proponents in Derby pointed out that tolls were for the upkeep of the bridge therefore with less traffic there would be less of a cost to repair when needed.[18]

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[13] Williamson, 'George Sorocold', p. 49.
[14] Celia M. Swainson, *Waterways to Derby* (Cromford: 1993), p. 21.
[15] Williamson, 'George Sorocold', p. 52.
[16] James Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics': Episodes from Derbyshire c.1660-1760*, Unpublished PhD Thesis (Durham University: 2018), p. 124
[17] *An Answer to the reasons against the Bill for Making the River Derwent Navigable*, 1720 (DLSL Box 24, No 43).
[18] *An Answer to the reasons against the Bill for Making the River Derwent Navigable*, 1720 (DLSL Box 24, No 43).

Nottingham also claimed that as there was already a navigation that reached Burton, Derby did not need a second one. Proponents countered that the new navigation would aid the counties of Staffordshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Lancashire which did not benefit from the Burton navigation. Nottingham also argued that as the Trent was impassable in the summer, the navigation and attendant decrease in flow water would benefit only those who controlled wharfs and locks. The first point was countered by the contention that since the navigation was on the Derwent, and the river actually rose in summer, the navigation would be of more use, not less, and that since the act allowed for anyone to build a wharf, it would create more opportunity for use and not less.[19] Other towns in the region became involved in the dispute. Leicester, Uttoxeter and the metal working traders of Birmingham all supported it, whereas small villages to the north and east of Derby, such as West Hallam, Houlbrooke, Heage, Belper, and Ilkeston, all feared a drop in trade as they depended on local carriage. Chesterfield also opposed it fearing damage to their lead trade, as did Mansfield who saw damage to their barley and grain trade and Duffield who predicted physical damage to the land in their area.[20] This back and forth represents how tenuous inter-town relationships could be and how volatile the position of urban centres was in this period as the threat of becoming obsolete in regional trade was a very real presence.[21]

Name	**Position**	**Positions at time of Act (unless otherwise stated and where known)**
William Woolley (d. 1719)	Primary	Of Darley Hall, Derbyshire, Merchant
Thomas Gisborne (c. 1679-1760)	Primary	Alderman, JP
Benjamin Blundell	Primary	
Thomas Rivett (1679-1724)	Primary	Alderman, later MP for Derby
Abraham Crompton (1649-1724	Primary	Banker
John Chambers	Primary	
Francis Cockayne (c. 1651-1739)	Primary	Alderman
Robert Wagstaffe (c. 1662-1747)	Primary	Was alderman by 1728
Samuel Fox (d. 1755)	Primary	Became alderman in 1740
Samuel Shepherdson	Primary	
William Cavendish (1672-1729)	Secondary	2nd Duke of Devonshire
James Cavendish (c. 1678-1751)	Secondary	MP for Derbyshire, younger brother to 3rd Duke of Devonshire
Thomas Coke (1674-1727	Secondary	MP for Derbyshire
Sir John Harpur (c. 1679-1741)	Secondary	4th Baronet of Calke Abbey, Derbyshire
Sir John Curzon (1674-1727)	Secondary	3rd Baronet of Kedleston Hall, Tory MP for Derbyshire
Sir Edward Coke (1648-1727)	Secondary	3rd Baronet of Longford, Derbyshire

[19] *An Answer to the reasons against the Bill for Making the River Derwent Navigable*, 1720 (DLSL Box 24, No 43).
[20] Riordan, *Power, Ideology and 'County Politics'*, pp. 121-5.
[21] Gray, *Nottingham Through 500 years*, p. 132.

Sir John Every (1654-1729)	Secondary	4th Baronet of Eggington
Simon Degge (1694-1729)	Secondary	
Samuel Pole (1651-1731)	Secondary	Of Radbourne Hall, Derbyshire
Nathaniel Curzon (1678-1758)	Secondary	Tory MP for Derby until 1715, later 4th Baronet of Kedleston Hall and MP for Derbyshire
William Curzon (c. 1681-1749)	Secondary	Younger brother to 3rd Baronet of Kedleston
John Fitzherbert	Secondary	
Isaac Borrow (1673-1745)	Secondary	Alderman by 1730
Francis Mundy (1690-1720)	Secondary	Of Markeaton Hall, Derbyshire
German Pole (c. 1686-1765)	Secondary	Of Radbourne Hall, Derbyshire
Robert Wilmot (c. 1674-1738)	Secondary	Of Osmaston Hall, Derbyshire
John Gisborne (c. 1665-1762)	Secondary	Alderman by 1729
William Fitzherbert (1671-1739)	Secondary	Of Tissington Hall, Derbyshire, Recorder for Derby
William Chambers (1665-1724)	Secondary	Reverand
Thomas Chambers (1660-1726)	Secondary	Copper and lead merchant
Robert Holden (1676-1746)	Secondary	Esq.
Thomas Bainbridge (1678-1746)	Secondary	
Mayor, Aldermen, Recorder	Secondary	
John Lombe (1693-1722)	Secondary	Owner of Silk Mill

Table 3: Trustees for the Derwent Navigation Act, 1719.[22]

The trustee list drawn up once the act had passed (see table 3) shows why the opposition of the burgesses in 1696 and 1716 was understandable in that it contained members of the rural nobility and urban elite with little representation from those in the middling trades (although a property qualification for trustees was not included as it would be with later improvement acts). Of the 34 names on the list, there were two members each of the Cavendish, Coke, and Curzon families who provided MPs to the borough and county for much of this period, plus a smattering of other rural gentry, much of the higher bench of the corporation and members of urban families which appear throughout this thesis such as Thomas Gisborne (c.1679-1760), Samuel Fox (d. 1755) and Abraham Crompton (1649-1724).[23] The trustees were given significant powers over the course of the river and its banks although a commission was set up to ensure those with property by the river were treated fairly.[24] Thus river navigation was led primarily by a small group of elite backers. Whereas turnpikes had much larger trustee lists due to roads passing through multiple parishes and many different towns,

[22] *Derwent Navigation Act*, 1719 (DLSL4649)
[23] Swainson, *Waterways to Derby*, pp. 20-21.
[24] Williamson, 'George Sorocold', p. 53.

the navigation trustee list was much more urban based, although backed by the usual rural nobility with interest in Derby's urban economy.

Seven decades later in 1791, during the canal mania that had spread throughout the country, these similar arguments would reappear for the proposal of a canal linking Derby to the Grand Trunk in the south and the coal fields to the north. The Derwent Navigation had become unreliable, suffered from sporadic flooding, low water levels, and a meandering route, and the new canal would therefore offer a much more direct means of passage.[25] According to the promoters of the venture, the canal would benefit agriculture, bring an 'extension of Commerce', and provide '*RELIEF OF THE POOR* [their italics and capitalisation], in the articles of necessary consumption.'[26] The relief of the poor would be accomplished by the cheaper transport of coal, alongside a separate charitable subscription to purchase them, and so it was claimed that the canal would provide social benefits.[27] A counter committee set up to oppose the plan, attended by John Harrison, Charles Upton (1752-1814) and William Jeffrey Lockett (1768-1839), does not appear to have made a dent in the enthusiasm, nor did opposition from the Grand Trunk trustees who feared a fall in water flow should another spur be added to their canal.[28] This was perhaps because of the financial incentive that canals had during the early 1790s. The profit of the Loughborough canal for example, had grown from 5% in 1780 to 20% in 1790, whereas the Staffordshire canal was, according to the *Mercury*, paying out 30% on their subscriptions, which was no doubt known by Derby's urban elite.[29] Supporters of the act included merchants, manufacturers, and traders but also rural nobility. The pre-act committee included Sir Robert Wilmot (c.1752-1834), 2nd Baronet of Osmaston Hall; William Cox and Francis Agard who were both corn merchants; Joseph Wilkes who was a coal master; and William Drury Lowe (1753-1827) who owned coal pits and was the first to use the canal on opening day.[30] All of these committee members also lived or worked on the proposed path of the canal. Duckham has argued that those most interested in canal building were local and interested in economic objectives and this appears to be the case in Derby especially as certain

[25] Swainson, *Waterways to Derby*, p. 9.
[26] Michael F. Smith, *The Derby Canal* (Ilkeston: 1980), p. 16.
[27] Paul A. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People, England 1727-1783* (Oxford: 1989), p. 416.
[28] *Derby Mercury*, 19th July 1792.
[29] Baron Duckham, 'Canals and River Navigation', in Derek Aldcroft and Michael Freeman (eds.), *Transport in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester: 1983), p108; *Derby Mercury,* 2nd June 1791.
[30] Smith, *The Derby Canal*, pp. 19, 31, and 35.

committee members were contracted to work on the canal such as William Evans who provided the metal lock gates along the route.[31]

The *Derby Mercury* lauded the success of the Derby canal committee praising the 'adoption of a measure apparently fraught with the most important benefits' which could not 'fail of enlarging the commerce, promoting the comfort of the inhabitants and adding to the respectability of the town.'[32] Improvement of commercial connections in the latter eighteenth century were therefore seen as part of wider cultural improvements associated with the urban renaissance, whereas a century before, the Derwent Navigation was proposed only in terms of economic gain. A general assembly was established to move forward with the plans, consisting primarily of members of the pre-act committee. The canal was to leave Derby in three directions, north to Little Eaton, south to meet the Grand Trunk canal and west to meet the Erewash canal, thus linking the lime works, the mines of Horsley, Smalley and Morley, the Erewash and the Cromford canals, with Derby at the centre to facilitate the 'import of Merchandize both from the East and West.'[33]

This project differed from other improvement ventures not only because it was solely funded by public subscription, but it also cost much more than cultural projects such as the assembly rooms and bridge rebuilding projects. In September 1792, lots were drawn for the 173 shares in the canal, costing £100 each. Of these original shares, 73 were owned by residents in Derby with the rest of the shareholders being found predominantly in the surrounding villages. As lots were drawn to distribute the select number of shares, we cannot use the names as a true representation of which social and economic groups had an interest in the canal. Throughout the building of the canal, the committee called in money from the shareholders in 10% increments, but they were often frustrated in this duty by shareholders unwilling to pay. For shareholders, the financial involvement would have been hefty, thus explaining why the newspaper carried adverts regarding the sale of shares such as in May 1793, soon after the initial lots were drawn.[34] Throughout 1794, the committee were calling for a further 10% on all shares every couple of months only to find that once they had reached 100% in June

[31] Duckham, 'Canals and River Navigation', p. 104.
[32] Smith, *The Derby Canal*, p. 21.
[33] Smith, *The Derby Canal*, p. 16.
[34] *Derby Mercury,* 2nd May 1793.

1795, they still required £15,000 to complete the project.[35] In the following month, 15 shares had been put up for sale suggesting this further call for money was not readily received by all shareholders.[36] In October of the same year, it was announced that a further £9000 was needed from subscribers to complete the project.[37] The original canal proposal had hoped for a 30% yield on subscriptions but by 1796, there was hope only for a 8% yield.[38] Very few canals were able to finish under budget and the spiralling of costs for the Derby canal, plus the difficulty in retaining shareholders, shows how the project was much bigger than could be sustained from the small geographic interest.

One of the main aims of the canal was that it would benefit the poor from a greater amount of coal being brought in for a lower price. 5,000 tons were supposed to be carried down the canal, toll-free, and distributed to the poor but this target was not easily achieved. The canal did take heavy traffic off the turnpike networks, making it cheaper to transport goods, but the coal fields were only connected to the canal by a railway which could not handle the increase in volume of coal passing along its lines.[39] The Canal committee were well aware of this failure, as seen at a meeting in 1797 where they noted the inadequate supply of coals to Derby via the canal and expressed the necessity for the accommodation of the public and the 'interest' of the company, though their definition of 'interest' is not obvious.[40] They immediately got to work with William Drury Lowe of Locko Park agreeing to bring 80 tons of coal per day to keep Derby market stocked through all seasons. He was allowed six months credit in tonnage costs to allow him to do this plus he was provided a wharf in the town.[41] Aside from a donation by a Mr Stone of 1,000 tons of coal for the town in 1799, there is no further mention of a deficit in coal transportation before the end of the century suggesting they met their proposed quota.[42]

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[35] *Derby Mercury,* 4th June 1795.
[36] *Derby Mercury,* 30th July 1795.
[37] *Derby Mercury,* 15th October 1795.
[38] *Derby Mercury,* 18th February 1796.
[39] Theo Barker and Dorian Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport 1700-1900* (Cambridge: 1993), p. 29; Smith, *The Derby Canal*, p. 37.
[40] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 16th December 1797 (DLSL DL76/138).
[41] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 25th December 1797 (DLSL DL76/138).
[42] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 5th November 1799 (DLSL DL76/138).

Aside from the canal itself, the other main physical impact of the canal could be found in the development of the wharf area around Cock Pit Hill. Wharves had existed there since the Derwent Navigation had been built in 1720 and it was highlighted as a bustling commercial area by the Buck brothers in their prospect of the town created in 1728.[43] In 1794 the canal committee took over the wharf, at that time still owned by the navigation company, and began to expand its operation. They created the position of wharfinger to weigh boats and distribute tonnage rates and formed a fleet of committee-owned boats to handle the proposed transport of coal for the poor.[44] Six boats were purchased in 1795 to ship six vessel loads of coal per week to be stacked on the wharf.[45] A weighing machine, standing opposite the China Works, was added in 1796 whilst Sir John Thorold (1734-1815), 9th Baronet of Syston, who owned land adjacent to the existing wharf, was told to build a public wharf on his land within a year or the company would.[46] Another wharf was built by the company on land belonging to Thomas Bingham in 1797 which included a crane to load and unload boats through the location of this land is not clear.[47] In total, the canal committee controlled three wharves, two sited by Cock Pit Hill, and a warehouse at St Mary's Bridge further up the river, as well as a fleet of boats. The available trade directories from the period show the majority of wharfingers and shipping companies listed in the *Universal British Directory* c.1790-8 being located in Shardlow, where the River Derwent met the River Trent with no reference to wharves in Derby. In the *Pigot's Directory* of 1818 on the other hand, two agents, two coal dealers, and four wharfingers are listed as being located at the Cock Pitt Hill, three were based at the Morledge, and another at the 'Derby Old Wharf' which may refer to the Derwent Navigation wharf.[48] A direct result of the canal therefore was an increase in water-bound commercial traffic which created a series of wharves which, although not as extensive as others such as Shardlow and Gainsborough, was significant enough to be noted in trade directories.

[43] Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, *East Prospect of Derby*, 1728.
[44] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 28th May 1795 (DLSL DL76/138).
[45] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 23rd December 1795 (DLSL DL76/138).
[46] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 22nd February 1796 and 28th November 1796 (DLSL DL76/138).
[47] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 25th December 1797 and 27th January 1798 (DLSL DL76/138).
[48] Philip Riden (ed.), *Derbyshire Directories 1781-1824* (Chesterfield: 2006).

The improvement of waterways in Derby was led primarily by a small trading and manufacturing segment of the borough's urban elite and benefitted only them through the increase in bulk water-borne trade. The Derwent Navigation was the sole project of a handful of urban traders whereas the canal committee had only 14 members, 173 shareholders, and was one of two projects proposed by different factions amongst the urban elite. The only proposed benefit to the wider populace with the canal, that of the cheaper transport of coals, was not fully realised until five years after the canal was built and only after direct action by the committee. Derby's waterways were crucial to the development of local trade and industry as well as to the wider regional market. Both the Derwent Navigation and the canal had to be proposed on their benefit to Derby and the surrounding area, whilst proponents and opposition came from as far south as London and as far north as Cheshire. This shows that Derby was part of a national grid of inland waterways but most importantly increased commercial connections with the rural hinterland to which this thesis turns now.

Derby's Economy and Rural Linkages

Although the idea of an industrial town, where the town economy depended on industrial output, was primarily a late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century idea, Derby by 1734 had 'what amounted to an industrial estate: there were mills for slitting and rolling iron sheet, for nail-making, for rolling copper sheets for sheathing sea-going boats, for lead smelting, as well as a number of iron foundries, and gypsum, plaster and colour works' plus Lombe's famous silk mill, all of which were powered by the River Derwent or the Markeaton Brook.[49] Perhaps the most important output of Derby's industrial growth, as seen in chapter one, was the rising class of traders and manufacturers that it created and the excess wealth with which they were able to assert themselves on urban life. Families who were setting up business in the town at the start of the eighteenth century were key members of the urban elite by the end of it. This section will look at the relationship in Derby between the town's economic output, the corporation, and the borough's urban renaissance and show how the three were intrinsically linked.

[49] Michael Reed, *The Georgian Triumph 1700-1830* (London: 1983), p. 139.

As with the discussions of the waterways earlier in this chapter, Derby's economic prosperity cannot be taken out of the national and regional contexts on which it was dependent. The East Midland towns of the eighteenth century were all involved in the making of stockings though with each town specialising in a different material with Nottingham making cotton, Leicester making woollen, and Derby making silk. Although part of a regional manufacturing output, specialisation in some respect was still key to economic survival.[50] Derby was also known for its brewing industry throughout the period and then its porcelain industry which developed after 1750. Silk goods and porcelain were essential features of the new eighteenth-century consumer culture whereas the brewing industry led to a particular concentration of alehouses in the town, cornerstones of the local Georgian urban flowering.

The silk industry was already well established in Derby when John Lombe built his silk mill in 1721. It employed 300 workers under the same roof, which started the centripetal forces that took workers out of their houses and into mills and factories.[51] By 1790, there were 12 silk mills in the town employing 1,000 workers, just below 10% of the town's population.[52] So numerous were silk mill owners that by the end of the eighteenth century, they had formed a strong lobbying group that fought to protect their interests. The first mention of silk throwsters collaborating to protect their industry in the town was in 1777 when ten businesses appear together creating a subscription amongst them to prosecute workers embezzling or stealing silk.[53] This developed into a union of silk throwsters in 1780 to continue the fight against embezzlers and those purchasing embezzled goods.[54] This is the only example of a union amongst mill owners within a certain trade in Derby, with other examples of unions being amongst workers or across multiple trades, thus was the strength of the silk industry in the borough.

It was not just the new industries on which Derby thrived, the town still retained a strong agricultural link with its rural hinterland and its greatest strength remained as a trading hub for raw industrial materials as well as produce. The growing urban workforce in the late-eighteenth century was particularly 'dependent upon the market

[50] Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 284.
[51] Reed, *Georgian Triumph*, p. 147.
[52] Penelope J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: 1982), p. 29.
[53] *Derby Mercury,* 27th June 1777.
[54] *Derby Mercury,* 14th April 1780, 4th November 1784, 30th June 1785.

economy' for the sale of their labour and the purchase of their provisions with an increased dependency on the agricultural sector.[55] Towns at the centre of communication networks flourished as trading hubs as raw materials passed between mines, farms, and ports. Where urban authorities were sympathetic to trade and towns were physically altered to handle an increase in traffic with widened streets and new markets areas developed, prosperity followed with road and water improvements making the country more accessible.[56]

Figure 6: Thomas Kitchin, after Peter Perez Burdett, *Map of Derbyshire*, 1791 (2nd edition)

Derby sat centrally on cross-country turnpikes (see Figure 6) and this is shown in the figures regarding destinations of direct services from the town and the number of wagons and carts making journeys. Derby in 1835, compared to other urban centres in the Midlands, had a middling level of destinations (54) and weekly trading wagons (225), sitting behind Leicester (160 and 541), Nottingham (125 and 338), and Birmingham (105 and 579). Yet the town had a high ratio of wagons per destination (4.2) suggesting that trade was important to the town yet was regionally limited when compared to the bigger urban centres. The figures for coaches again show Derby having a middling level of coach destinations and weekly coaches in 1835 when compared to bigger Midland centres and 22% of those coaches went to Birmingham. This suggests

[55] Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, p. 135.
[56] Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England* (New Haven, 2007), p. 239.

that Derby's commercial and communication interest was regionally dense and reliant on larger urban centres nearby for connections traveling further afield.[57]

John Houghton's *Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*, written in the 1690s, gives one of the few descriptions of Derby's markets from the beginning of the period covered by this thesis, written from information sent to him by agents. He noted grain coming from South Derbyshire, oats, cabbages, and asparagus from North Derbyshire, turnips, trout, eels, barbels, pikes, deer, hares, rabbits, a great 'store of cyder', and apples. Concerning industrial materials, his agents found iron ore, mill-stones serving 'most part of the kingdom', alabaster marble, brick which his friend 'never saw better' made or burnt, clay for tobacco pipes, 'lime which makes as good Mortar as can be used', and plaster.[58] Malt was taken to Cheshire and Lancashire whilst coke was transported to London.[59] Fruit and vegetables came in from the Potteries and the Low Peak, the cattle market was essential to the town and the surrounding villages, and lead came from mines in Wirksworth and passed through the town and along the Trent to Hull, the latter being the largest trade in 1704-5.[60] A century later, in 1809, *Pigot's Directory* described Derby's trade as being primarily malt, marble work, jewellery, lapidary stones, silk, cotton, worsted stockings, earthenware, and porcelain. Although this was by no means a complete report on Derby's markets, it does show there was little change in the core provisions, such as marble, stone and malt, but there were the addition of stocking-making, earthenware and porcelain, highlighting that Derby was partially involved in trades connected with consumption culture.

Market Regulation and the Derby Company of Mercers

Until 1730, Derby's trade was largely managed by the Company of Mercers, a governing body who were responsible for maintaining standards of the markets and urban tradesmen and separate to the body of freemen with its own regulations and entry requirements. The company used various means to establish their place in the urban economy, but their position declined when the trades they represented were eclipsed by the growth of other trades, such as the textile industry, that were not covered by

[57] Neil Raven and John Stobart, 'Networks and Hinterlands: Transport in the Midlands', in Stobart and Raven (eds.), *Towns, Regions and Industries*, pp. 84 and 90-91, 93, 99.
[58] John Houghton, *Collection for the Improvement of Trade and Husbandry* (Vol 2, Num 44: June 2nd 1693).
[59] Houghton, *Collection for the Improvement of Trade and Husbandry* (Vol 2, Num 39: April 28th 1693).
[60] Stephen Glover, Glover's Derby, facsimile edition of 1849 publication (Derby: 1992), p. 9; William A. Richardson, *Citizen's Derby* (London: 1949), p. 132; Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 153.

their restrictive entry criteria. When the company ceased to exist in the 1730s, their market responsibilities were shared between the corporation and the justices as they did not limit their purview to certain trades as the company did, but to all those trading in the town. This section will show how the company and the corporation controlled trade in Derby and were able to shape it to their own wishes, another way in which the urban elite, as members of both, could exert great influence in protecting their trades and rights.

The right to a guild was conferred on the town by King John in 1204 and confirmed by Henry III and Edward III with the latter adding a specification that it should not be used to oppress the people.[61] The Derby Company of Mercers was founded in 1675 and in the grant confirming their status the corporation, who were in their own words 'authorized & enabled to make Orders and Bylaws for the good & wholesome government of the said Burrough', stated that having seen successful guilds established in other towns, they wished to 'create the Mercers, Apothecaryes, Grocers, Ironmongers, Upholsterers, and Milliners, of this Burrough by the name of the Company, society, fraternity, or Brotherhood of Mercers.'[62] The guild was created in the image of and with the support of, the corporation, in that it had a hierarchy of roles: a steward, two wardens (elected annually), ten brothers, and a body of members, but it was intended from the start to be a completely separate entity.[63]

Eighteenth-century trade guilds have been noted for showing 'great diversity and adaptability to local conditions.'[64] Derby's guild was open to any person working in a trade mentioned in the establishing grant. According to Houghton, all apothecaries, ironmongers, mercers, and upholsterers in Derby were members within eight years of the founding of the company, suggesting that joining it was either an attractive prospect or a necessity. At the same time, it barred bakers, butchers, masons, plasterers, and tailors with no explanation as to why.[65] Unlike the corporation, there were no rules stopping dissenters or women from joining. On the original member lists, two are

[61] Henry H. A. Bemrose, 'The Derby Company of Mercers', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 15, 1893), pp. 113-4.
[62] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 118-9.
[63] Maxwell Craven*, An Illustrated History of Derby*, 2nd Edition (Derby: 2007), p. 77; Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 119.
[64] Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, p. 86
[65] Bemrose, 'The Derby Company of Mercers', pp. 136-7; Richardson, *Citizen's Derby*, p. 115.

dissenters, one of them being Abraham Crompton who would become a prominent member. Within the first year of operation there were also at least three female members showing that unlike the corporation which also did not formally bar women, they were not barred by custom either.[66] Widows were allowed to carry on their husbands trade as the marriage was seen as an apprenticeship and Peter Earle has shown that single women, as young as 21, were viewed as capable, financially and legally, of setting up business.[67] At Derby, Ann Bloodworth, grocer, was said to have virtually ran the Company for many years of its existence.[68] That said, no women were elected to be a member of the brethren or to any of the official positions. Smith has shown that York's Merchant Tailor's Company had 139 female members between 1693-1776 with 30-40% of new entrants after 1710 being women.[69] Unfortunately the records of members have not survived to support this in the case of Derby. What can be determined though is that of all the cases brought against those trading illegally, half were brought against women which shows that either there were more women than men involved in trade in Derby than is suggested by other sources, or that women who did trade were more likely to be denied the freedom of the company.[70] Collinge has put this down to an unease in the company regarding economically autonomous women and places the refusal to admit them as the reason for the Company's decline.[71]

The company's primary purpose was to protect the represented trades from intrusion from outsiders who were either taking up business or undercutting prices. The company had freedom to test weights and measures and to monitor apprenticeships whilst keeping accurate records and maintaining secrecy.[72] They also had the right to enter premises to check for infractions though there is no evidence this was ever carried out. Most of their energy was spent protecting their trade with their entry policy being only to accept those who were the 'Discretest, Honestest, Ablest persons'.[73]

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[66] Lindsey Charles, 'Introduction', in Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (eds.), *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England* (London: 1985), p. 10.
[67] Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London: 1989), pp. 158 and 160.
[68] Craven, *Illustrated History of Derby*, p. 77.
[69] Simon Smith, 'Women's Admission to Guilds in Early-Modern England: The Case of the York Merchant Tailors' Company, 1693-1776', in *Gender & History* (17:1, April 2005), pp. 99-100.
[70] *Derby Company of Mercers Minute Book 1675-1740* (DLSL Parcel 200).
[71] Peter Collinge, 'Guilds, Authority and the Individual: The Company of Mercers' Prosecutions of Dorothy Gretton in Early Eighteenth-Century Derby' in *Business History* (61:2, 2019) pp. 287 and 290.
[72] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', pp. 122-5.
[73] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 138 and 124.

Although the company was separate from the corporation, there were certain situations in which they cooperated. If the company found evidence that a trader was using incorrect weights or measures, then it was the corporation who handled the punishment as well as disenfranchising those who broke the rules on apprentices.[74] Also, if the corporation was sued for any action undertaken by the company, the company had to reimburse them.[75]

So successful was the Derby Company of Mercers that they were in a position by 1692 to loan the corporation £40 for the continuation of the water works.[76] 20 years later only £30 of it had been repaid even though nine members of the company had served as mayor in that time.[77] In total, 16 members of the company served as mayor between 1675-1740 showing that it was dominated by the same leading tradesmen as the corporation.[78] Meetings took place in a variety of houses and inns but the meeting during Easter week, where the steward and wardens were elected, was for the first 10 years of the company held in the Town Hall which again shows the links with the corporation.[79] There was not a definitive end to the company, as was normal for most guilds in this period, but they vanish from record after 1740. It could be conjectured that their role and membership became so synonymous with the corporation that there was no longer any need to have two separate organisations.[80] This is backed by looking at the language used when the company acted against illegal traders. For most of their history, the company prosecuted those caught 'infringing the liberties of the company' by illegally selling produce whilst not a member of the company.[81] Whereas the last entry in the company minute book, dated November 1740, discussed how the accused traded in town whilst not being a freeman of the borough, showing how freeman status and company status were now one and the same.[82] Also, the trades listed in the original grant were not those that experienced any considerable growth in the town in the

[74] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 136 and 124.
[75] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 129.
[76] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 146; *Derby Company of Mercers Minute Book 1675-1740*, 26th October 1700 (DLSL Parcel 200).
[77] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 147.
[78] Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 136.
[79] *Derby Company of Mercers Minute Book 1675-1740* (DLSL Parcel 200).
[80] Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, p. 87; Bemrose, 'Derby Company of Mercers', p. 153; Collinge, 'Guilds, Authority and the Individual', p. 290.
[81] *Derby Company of Mercers Minute Book 1675-1740*, 27th January 1676 and 10th January 1677 (DLSL Parcel 200).
[82] *Derby Company of Mercers Minute Book 1675-1740,* 13th November 1740 (DLSL Parcel 200).

second half of the eighteenth century so it is likely that it no longer truly represented the needs of Derby's economy as new trades had gained greater prominence.

From the disappearance of the company to the end of the century, the regulation of trade appears to have fallen on a combination of the magistrates, the corporation, and the trades themselves. As discussed in chapter three, the rising price of basic foodstuff could cause rioting so maintaining a steady and fair market was of great benefit to the peace of the town. Food riots targeted those engrossing or forestalling corn, which was where sellers would purposefully retain corn to create a scarcity and artificially raise prices. In 1766, the mayor, William Evans (d. 1773), tried to get farms to bring corn to the market as soon as was possible whilst also seeking to prevent the poor from attacking them due to the dearness of the provisions in a thinly supplied market despite a bountiful harvest.[83] In 1795, a meeting of county gentry was called to discuss this topic which concluded that they should force farmers to bring their produce to the market under the supervision of a committee who would be responsible for distribution.[84]

The corporation's main concern appears to have been the protection of the rights of the burgesses, rather than wider market regulations. Burgesses could sell produce in the town on all days except Sundays whereas non-burgesses were limited to selling only during fairs, which came at a cost. Non-burgesses got around these rules by selling before the market was officially open, thus guaranteeing better prices, or selling away from the marketplace before customers had reached the legitimate stalls. Thomas Houghton whilst mayor in 1727, threatened a 15 shilling fine to any house, barn, or inn where the illegal selling was taking place.[85] This problem continued as mayoral warnings against illegal market practices were printed in the newspaper in 1757, 1766, 1771, 1791, 1795, all years linked with national food riots.[86] The corporation also inherited from the company the responsibility for checking weights and measures and regulating apprentices. The latter was of particular importance as apprentices to burgesses could themselves become burgesses, and therefore voters, after seven years

[83] *Derby Mercury,* 26th September 1766.
[84] *Derby Mercury,* 29th October and 5th November 1795.
[85] *Derby Postman,* 26th October 1727.
[86] *Derby Mercury*, 21st October 1757, 17th October 1766, 11th October 1771, 1st September 1791, and 3rd December 1795; John Rule, *Albion's People: English Society 1714-1815* (New York: 1994), p. 196.

of work. In 1771, William Merrill Locket (1732-1777), the town clerk, was appointed to enter the details of all apprentices and servants, receiving three shillings and four pence per entry. Anyone who was not recorded would be denied burgess status once they were eligible.[87]

The regulation of the weight and quality of produce appears regularly in newspaper reports through the century. Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782) on becoming mayor in 1767, proposed a weekly meeting between himself and the justices of the borough to discuss town business with the regulation of weights and measures being of particular concern.[88] Previously to this were many incidents of produce being sold under weight or of poor quality. In 1728, a letter in the *Derby Postman* revealed that one lady of the town had been ridiculed at breakfast by her guests who had pointed out that the butter she'd had thought was good, was only whey butter. She lamented that the 'Country People' had been able to sell good butter at the same price as whey butter.[89] Within a few years of the Crompton meetings, the corporation and justices were requiring fruit sellers and victuallers to attend the Town Hall to have their licenses checked, had fined one publican for selling oats under measure, and had also tested all skins and hides that were to be sold on market day.[90] From 1758 until the early-nineteenth century, a table was printed in the *Mercury* every week giving the prices of white, wheat, and household bread in the town with a stipulation that bakers were to mark each loaf with the type and the bakers initials.[91] In 1787, to further protect buyers at the market, weights were set up in an anti-chamber of the Town Hall so the poor could test the weight of purchased provisions.[92]

The regulation of trades and markets was a constant concern to Derby's urban elite, either as justices, members of the corporation, or members of the Company of Mercers. They would have been acutely aware of the link between high food prices and rioting but also the risk to their own livelihoods brought by engrossers and forestallers, embezzlers or generally by new traders seeking a portion of the market. The actions of

[87] *Derby Mercury,* 30th August 1771.
[88] *Derby Mercury,* 9th October 1767.
[89] *Derby Postman,* 18th July 1728.
[90] *Derby Mercury,* 16th October 1767, 11th November 1768, and 9th November 1770.
[91] *Derby Mercury,* 20th October 1758.
[92] *Derby Mercury,* 31st May 1787.

the corporation and the company of mercers also highlights how Derby's market was not an open market but one that was policed and shaped by the urban elites who were members of both.

Conclusion

The improvement of water linkages to national networks gave Derby significance as a trading and manufacturing centre that was taken advantage of by the urban elites who were sympathetic to commerce and derived much benefit from the growing local economy throughout this period. These benefits though were limited to certain social groups either due to circumstance or through the actions of the Company of Mercers, the corporation, or lobby groups. Derby's commercial and industrial prosperity had few benefits for the poor and although attempts were made by supporters of the canal from the 1790s and through the regulation of weights and measures to bring social benefits, there is little evidence that these were achieved. The Derwent Navigation and the canal benefitted only those with interests in bulk trade who were also those lobbying for their creation in the first place. The market for foodstuffs was consistently undermined through the self-interest of engrossers and forestallers of grain and corn, or those knowingly selling underweight or poor-quality goods. Attempts by the corporation and justices to police the market and quash such practices appear to have made little headway as the same kind of measures were still being attempted late in the century as had been tried a century before.

Another advantage gained by the growth in income from trade and manufacturing in the town was that it created the surplus wealth which helped facilitate Derby's cultural flowering. There was an increase in the production of cultural and consumer goods in the town such as silk stockings, porcelain and clocks and watches which became a cornerstone of Derby's urban economy. The town was also famous for its manufacturing and distribution of ale leading to a rise in inns and alehouses thus showing a direct link between manufacture and culture. Some of the most important figures in Derby's urban elite in this period gained their prominence from the wealth they achieved in these industries and they directly supported the borough's urban culture as patrons and financers, which will be the theme of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Derby's Urban Renaissance

The long eighteenth century has been characterised as a period of cultural revival but also as a period that saw a 'broader process of spatial segregation' as a cultural, financial, and even physical gap opened between social groups.[1] Borsay has emphasised how much the post-Restoration urban renaissance resulted from the rising wealth of the middling sorts, the increased engagement in urban affairs by the rural nobility, and their collective attempts to 'improve' town life through cultural pursuits between the 1660s and 1760s. The turnpike and water navigation systems not only helped to foster an increase in trade in towns such as Derby, but also brought in visitors and news. Towns developed consumer economies reliant upon the pursuit of fashionable recreations which were promoted in local newspapers, characterised by the creation and influx of printed materials and social gatherings. Rather than fostering a unifying urban culture however, the benefits of Derby's Georgian urban flowering were concentrated on the local elite and limited for the lower orders and labouring population. They therefore created and exacerbated divisions which are evident in the townscape and varied experiences of social classes.

Whilst there have been some disagreements about the chronology and impact of improvements in different centres, Borsay's urban renaissance model serves as a useful framework for studies of culture in eighteenth-century towns. Borsay argued that towns experienced a post-Restoration cultural revival determined primarily by their social character and function. The urban revitalisation was stimulated by interaction between the rural nobility and the urban gentry and middling sorts which served the towns natural role as a 'point of exchange and meeting place for society.'[2] This chapter argues that many of the features of Borsay's urban renaissance model are accurately reflected in the development of eighteenth-century Derby, however, it maintains that the chronology of change was different and that there were differences because the town was not a leisure centre and became a growing industrial and manufacturing centre in the period.

[1] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford: 1991), p. 294.
[2] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 267.

The major cultural change of the long eighteenth century in England centred on an increased need for human contact as a new style of public sociability came to the fore. Urban centres already served as points of exchange but this sociability, like the ceremonies of the corporation, clubs and societies, and religious activities, had a strict hierarchy, keeping it within the traditional boundaries of the social segregation of community life.[3] Therefore, although urban culture in the eighteenth century offered greater social inclusion to distinctive and sometimes disadvantaged groups, such as dissenters, women and the labouring poor, it remained on the terms set by the urban elite. If women in Derby, like other English towns, took part in clubs and societies, they were part of a male-centric public and semi-public culture but were prominent in the mixed sociability of assembly rooms, theatres and races.[4] Clark has shown how mixed gender societies were avoided by men who preferred homosocial pleasures.[5] For the labouring poor, custom, dress code or entry fee maintained the social barriers of cultural pursuits which moved from the plebeian to the polite throughout this period but lower entry fees to exhibits and the theatre, for example, for labourers and servants, mostly towards the end of the period, does show some attempt at provision for the poorer classes.[6]

Prosperity grew amongst the middle and upper reaches of urban society with cultural refinement, and the prestige it brought, being the most striking feature. For Lichfield, Bath, and other shopping and leisure towns, this became their distinguishing feature as the centres of polite society. Industrial and manufacturing towns sought this culture refinement too, which depended on the attractiveness of the place to local elites whose presence and energy shaped much of the character of public culture.[7] Barker has cited the 'importance of place' and civic pride as 'crucial elements in the discussion of cultural identity'.[8] According to Girouard, the process of becoming a leisure town depended on a

[3] Joyce M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680-1840* (Basingstoke: 2001), p. 67.
[4] Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800* (Oxford: 2000), pp. 199-200; Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Enlightenment c.1690-1800', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (ed.), *Women's History: British 1700-1850, An Introduction* (Abingdon: 2005), p. 14.
[5] Clark, *Clubs and Societies*, pp. 3, 191, and 198.
[6] Peter Borsay, ''All the Town's a Stage': Urban Ritual and Ceremony 1660-1800', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (London: Hutchinson & co, 1985), pp. 234 and 250.
[7] Catherine Smith, 'Urban Improvement in the Nottinghamshire Market Town, 1770-1840', in *Midland History*, 25:1, (2000); John V. Beckett and Catherine Smith, 'Urban Renaissance and Consumer Revolution in Nottingham, 1688-1750', in *Urban History* (27:1, May 2000).
[8] Hannah Barker, '"Smoke Cities": Northern Industrial Towns in Late Georgian England' in *Urban History*, (31:2, 2004), p177.

'decayed local industry, leading to cheap property', a 'good situation', and 'plenty of country houses in the neighbourhood'.[9] Travel writers of the post-Restoration period, such as Celia Fiennes and Daniel Defoe, were quick to evaluate towns based on the presence of polite society and gentry families.[10] This literate, polite, and urbane class was able to 'enjoy an unprecedented number of theatrical and musical performances, books and paintings' which lead to new building projects and general attempts to beautify the urban landscape with the founding of theatres, assembly rooms, and coffee rooms.[11] This culture gave the upper parts of society an 'alternative framework of thought and feeling' that could, according to Borsay, bridge political and religious differences, thus creating a degree of unity amongst the ruling elites.[12] Brewer, on the other hand, places culture in provincial society as depending on 'disparate talents' such as 'individuals' or 'amateur polymaths' who 'devoted themselves' to the arts and sciences, and 'put up money for theatres, joined book clubs and debating societies, and enjoyed sketching and painting.'[13] For Brewer, it was the middling sorts who had the most influence on urban culture. The middling sorts had to decide between joining in the upper-class culture which radiated from London or focus on provincial towns where there was genteel culture and a developing 'local civic pride'. Thompson was uninterested by this 'tug of war' whereas Wahrman was compelled by the 'element of suspense' that made the story compelling.[14]

The post-Restoration and Georgian urban flowering was partly inspired by what was perceived to be high culture, and especially neo-classicism, which embraced a broad range of cultural forms. However, it also saw the marginalisation of 'popular' forms of expressions such as ballads, folktales, and sporting pastimes as in Derby where bull-running and football were condemned by the rural nobility and some urban gentry. This process was two-fold in that 'polite' ventures were seen as central to the up-lifting effects of cultural refinement whereas traditional pastimes were seen as 'belonging to

[9] Mark Girouard, *The English Town* (New Haven: 1990), p. 84.
[10] Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle* (London, 1888); Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain,* P. N. Furbank, W. R. Owens, A. J. Coulson (eds.) (New Haven, 1991).
[11] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: 1997), p. xx.
[12] Borsay, 'All the Town's a Stage', p241
[13] Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 497.
[14] Edward P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?', in *Social History*, (3:2, 1978); Dror Wahrman, 'National Society, Communal Culture: An Argument about the Recent Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Social History* (17:1, January 1992), pp. 45-6.

an earlier stage of social development' and were therefore condemned as 'vulgar or crude' by men of taste.[15] This was not a natural process but a highly selective one, 'deliberately targeted to destroy areas of popular encroachment.'[16]

This chapter will start by focussing on the already established cultural form of the inn and alehouse and show how they were essential to cultural growth in Derby with various societies, assemblies and theatre productions taking place within them and their gardens or yards before purpose-built structures were erected. It will also look at coffee houses which failed to take off in Derby as they did in other urban centres and that section will determine why this may have been the case. The second section analyses the provincial press and how newspapers took an active part in shaping the town's cultural and political landscape through being a factional mouthpiece for small sections of society. The third section will show how sociability in the town gained a physical presence in the forms of the assembly rooms (1730 and 1763) and the theatre (1773), and how they served as a tangible social barrier. The final sections look at sports and societies which, alongside the assembly rooms, took on a distinctive social cliental but show how, particularly towards the end of the period, Derby's urban culture was moving away from the upper classes and becoming very much part of the middling sorts identity of the town. Aside from showing that Derby fits the urban renaissance model, though not during the period argued by Borsay, this chapter will also show that Derby's culture, although sparked by the influence of the rural nobility, was in large part run by the urban elite and middling sorts. It will also show how the cultural pastimes that required gentry backing struggled towards the end of the period, such as the races, the musical festivals, and the assemblies, whereas the middling sorts cultures of club, societies, and scientific lectures thrived.

Inns and Coffeehouses

At the start of the eighteenth century, Derby was said to have had 120 inns or alehouses and although this figure has been disputed, as it would have meant an alehouse for every 35 people (the national average was 1:87), this may simply highlight the

[15] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. xx.
[16] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 304.

importance of Derby's brewing industry.[17] They were places where 'corn might be factored, bills exchanged and bonds entered into, forwards in commodities bought and sold and information on the state of trade passed on' as well as being a space for socialising and the location of balls, societies, and theatre productions.[18] Sweet has argued that inns were as much the foundation of the urban renaissance and as essential a feature of urban life as the parish church and that there was 'little in the cultural, administrative, economic and political life of the town which did not have some connection with the inn' with Maudlin describing them as the 'grease on the axles of late Georgian mobility'.[19] Although, as the century progressed, inns lost some of these functions to new purpose-built spaces which 'diverted social traffic' away from the inns, they managed to retain both their number, and their importance.[20]

With the development of the turnpike network, inns gained new life in a competitive market as they were utilised by travellers, mail wagons, and coaches in need of a place to rest and change horses. This separated inns from the general mass of alehouses which were mostly frequented by the 'mechanic part of mankind' which, although being more informal, still provided lodgings, centres for certain trades, bankers, pawnbrokers, and cookshops.[21] Clark, in his study of English alehouses, differentiates between the inn, large and fashionable providing wine, beer, and ale, with elaborate food and lodgings; taverns, which could also offer wine to the prosperous customers but lacked the extensive accommodation; and alehouses which were small, sold mostly beer and ale but later spirits, and provided basic food and accommodation to the lowest classes. Clark then separates inns into three further categories, that of the country inn, situated in towns and patronised by the rural nobility, the secondary inns which were large and catered for the urban elite and gentry, and the market or carrier inn which was smaller and was closely involved with trade. For all three of these types of inns, 'lower-class

[17] Alan Everitt, 'The English Urban Inn 1560-1760', in Alan Everitt (ed.), *Perspectives in English Urban History* (London: 1973), p. 94; David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London: 1997), pp. 36-7.
[18] John Patten, *English Towns 1500-1700* (Folkestone: 1978), p. 201.
[19] Sweet, *The English Town*, p. 231; David Maudlin, 'Inns and Elite Mobility in Late Georgian Britain' in *Past and Present* (247:1, 2020), p. 40.
[20] Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (Harlow: 1983), p. 10.
[21] Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London: 1989), p. 55; Daniel Maudlin, 'The Urban Inn: Gathering Space, Hierarchy, and Material Culture in the Eighteenth-Century British Town', in *Urban History* (46:4, 2019).

visitors were increasingly unwelcome.'[22] So restrictive was entry to these establishments that Karl Philipp Moritz (1756-1793) was denied entry to an inn at Eton merely for arriving on foot.[23] Where taverns were seen as subverting the social order, inns reinforced them, being part of the development of marketplaces alongside guild halls and town houses.[24] Eighteenth-century Derby possessed such a hierarchy of inns and alehouses, highlighted by the cultural and politics events and meetings held in each establishment as certain societies, trusts, and urban elite figures favoured certain inns or alehouses. This section will demonstrate the importance that public houses had to the urban economy and cultural atmosphere and how some inns keepers and victuallers used this influence to become prominent townsmen.

Although inns could hold members of all social groups at once, they would have been in separate rooms leading to a 'growing degree of spatial specialisation' which was purposefully sought by landlords wishing to diversify their offerings.[25] The convention was that women were only allowed to enter with husbands or as part of a group on ritual occasions.[26] That said there were many female owners of alehouses and inns in Derby during this period either in partnership with their husband or on their own. Mrs Wartnaby ran the famous George Inn, 'one of the best accustomed Inns in England', after her husband's death in 1792 until selling it in 1794.[27] Frances Phillips was co-owner of the King's Head with her husband James from 1759 until his death in 1773 and she continued to run the business for a further 25 years after.[28] Elizabeth Tillotson had moved to the Bell and Castle in Sadlergate in 1774 with her husband Henry who died less than a week later, leaving it under her care until 1788.[29]

Theatre productions, assemblies and sports were an important part of a town's cultural calendar and in Derby they were often held in inns, although less so after the building of the assembly rooms in 1730 and 1763 and a theatre in 1773. The King's Head in the Corn Market, the second most principal inn in the town behind the George Inn, was a

[22] Clark, *English Alehouse*, pp. 5-7.
[23] Maudlin, 'Inns and Elite Mobility', p63.
[24] Maudlin, 'The Urban Inn', p625.
[25] Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 197.
[26] Clark, *Clubs and Societies*, p. 40; Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 311.
[27] Her husband was Matthew Wartnaby (c.1728-1792); *Derby Mercury,* 24th October 1766, 29th March 1792, and 23rd January 1794.
[28] *Derby Mercury,* 15th June 1759, 14th May 1773, and 1st March 1798.
[29] *Derby Mercury,* 17th June 1774 and 6th November 1788.

frequent host of assemblies. From at least 1753 to the end of the period, the King's Head was hosting ordinaries during race week, an essential part of the festivities, as did the George Inn.[30] The King's Head Inn also hosted fortnightly assemblies during winter in the latter half of the century, which suggests that the new assembly rooms were not fit to serve guests during the colder months whereas the King's Head was.[31] In terms of theatre productions, the White Hart in Irongate was the most prominent host as it had its own theatre built in the yard behind.[32] When it was rebuilt in 1754 the owners, Thomas and Anne Mountney, made sure to announce that it had been 'rebuilt with rooms for entertainment' as well.[33] Lesser inns and alehouses were also the location of sports and pastimes. The Angel Inn on Gaol Bridge was a regular host of cock fights with 76 meetings advertised in the *Mercury* between 1740 and 1797, with 12 occurring during race weeks between 1753 and 1768. So important was cock fighting to the Angel's income that a new pit was built for this purpose in 1786.[34] Several alehouses, such as the Crown in St Werburgh's, the Old Swan and the Sloop in St Peter's, and the Steeple House also held cock fights during this period but never for more than a few years.

Whereas assemblies and theatres in inns were dependent on facilities, clubs and societies were often linked to certain establishments through the innkeepers and victuallers. The Royal Oak in the marketplace, for example, was a frequent host of florist feasts and dinners in the 1750s whilst it was under the care of John Marriott. References in the *Mercury* to the feasts at the Royal Oak stopped around 1758 when Marriott was made keeper of the County Gaol.[35] Although the Royal Oak continued in its business until the end of the period, the florist feasts were never held there again after Marriott's departure. After a break, the 'old society' of florists appear at the Angel Inn between 1784-1797 with feasts also being held at the Black Boy in St Peter's. The best example of the hosting of societies and trusts being linked to a person rather than a location is shown by George Brentnall's (d. 1773) stint as owner of the Wine Vault in the marketplace. He owned the vault from 1754 to 1768 and in that period, he hosted seven

[30] References found in *Derby Mercury* covering 1753-1797.
[31] References in *Derby Mercury* covering 1768-1784.
[32] Widow Rayner's Company of Rope Dancers were advertised as performing at the White Hart Yard, Irongate, *Derby Mercury*, 14th July 1749.
[33] *Derby Mercury,* 1st February 1754.
[34] *Derby Mercury,* 13th April 1786.
[35] *Derby Mercury,* 2nd June 1758.

separate turnpike trusts, a much higher figure than any other inn or alehouse in the town in this period. When he left the establishment, so did the trusts whose meetings were from that point held in multiple different inns. As trustee lists only survive from the original act, we cannot determine whether Brentnall was a trustee or owned stake in the various turnpikes though, as shown in chapter three, the business was ones of those affected by the collapse of the Heath bank who were financially interested in turnpike trusts. Hosting such meetings was also a particularly healthy source of income for inn keepers. The minutes of the Derby Canal Committee show that in 1793, £19.6.9 was paid to the Star and Garter alehouse as well as payments to Mr and Mrs Wartnaby of the George Inn, John Campion of the Swan with Two Necks, and James Philips of the King's Head though it is not clear what these payments were for.[36] Campion was also paid £24.15.10 by the committee in 1795 for hosting a special assembly.[37]

The politics of the town were also represented in inns shown by the factions which frequented each establishment, the celebrations which happened within them as well as the names given to alehouses. It was custom, for example, for Whigs to frequent the George Inn and for Tories to visit the King's Head (the King in question being Charles II) though whether this was due to custom, the politics of the owners (which changed many times throughout the period) or the association of their respective names, is not certain.[38] For the George Inn, their chief patron was the Whig Dukes of Devonshire, who held many election celebrations at the inn in this period as well as dinners to wine and dine the corporation. Whig celebrations for national events were also held at the George, particularly towards the end of the period, such as a celebration for the election of Charles James Fox (1749-1806) at the Westminster election of 1784 and a dinner held in 1791 to celebrate the French Revolution.[39] The King's Head, on the other hand, was a regular meeting place for Tory election hopefuls such as the several Harpur and Curzon candidates in this period. This appears though to have started only after it was taken over by James and Frances Philips in 1759 suggesting the political specificity of events in the inn were down to their personal views.

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[36] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 24th August 1793 (DLSL DL76/138).
[37] *Derby Canal Company Committee Minutes*, 25th November 1795 (DLSL DL76/138).
[38] Maxwell Craven, *Inns & Taverns of Derby* (Derby: 1992), pp. 88-89.
[39] *Derby Mercury,* 27th May 1784 and 7th July 1791; Elaine Chalus, 'Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century' in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-century England* (Harlow: 1997), p. 173.

Whereas inns and alehouses were already well established as social centres by the start of the eighteenth century, coffee houses were relatively new, especially in the provinces, yet became central to urban sociability. In other urban centres, coffee houses became notable for many of the cultural aspects discussed above for inns and alehouses. They became 'places of private exchange where deals were cut and money, goods and information traded' but it was their role as 'centres of conversations and "intelligence"' and the 'stimulant for rational and political discourse', which gave them their unique character.[40] The newsrooms that were often attached attracted mainly shopkeepers and small manufacturers who could access newspapers and discuss topics with like-minded individuals forming a middle class version of the aristocratic parlour.[41] They often had an admission charge which, although as low as a penny, still provided a barrier, as did the dress code which required respectability. Internally, the coffee house as a trade could provide women and children with role within what could be a family business with the wife serving and the children distributing and cleaning.[42] In Derby, although middling sorts culture was strong in the town, coffee houses do not appear to have been as successful as they were in other urban centres though this may be down to the lack of evidence of their existence.[43]

References to Derby coffee houses are scant before the 1760s although one appears to have existed from 1693, evidenced by surviving trade tokens for Luke Neyld's coffee houses, the Murat's Head.[44] In 1768, a subscription for a coffee room was begun by gentlemen of the town at 10 shillings per year.[45] This room was in the Town Hall, rented from the corporation, and was advertised as having copies of the London papers.[46] After two further calls for subscribers, there are no further newspaper references to a coffee house or room in Derby until 1789 when a building for sale on Lodge Lane was referred to as the 'New Coffee House'.[47] Subsequently, in 1796, 'Nelly's Coffee House' is listed as part of an estate sale and in 1799, subscriptions for a new coffee room 'upon a liberal

[40] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 35; Peter Clarke and Robert Houston, 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840', in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, p. 579; Phil Withington, 'Where was the Coffee in Early Modern England?', in *The Journal of Modern History* (92:1, 2020), p41.
[41] Clarke and Houston, 'Culture and Leisure', p. 579.
[42] Earle, *Making of the English Middle Class*, p. 54.
[43] Withington, 'Where was the Coffee in Early Modern England?', p60.
[44] Maxwell Craven, *An Illustrated History of Derby* (Derby: 2007), p. 76,
[45] *Derby Mercury,* 4th November 1768,
[46] *Derby Mercury,* 18th November 1768.
[47] *Derby Mercury,* 22nd October 1798.

plan' were requested with a meeting to take place at the George Inn.[48] The New Inn, Gloucester, had a room that was labelled 'coffee house' so it is possible that like many of the other cultural pursuits discussed in this thesis, coffee was under the umbrella of Derby's urban inns and alehouses.[49]

These scattered and fleeting references suggest that coffee houses were not an important feature of Derby's urban culture. The purpose of coffee houses as places of sociability for clubs and societies, and as places of exchange, was still a distinguishing feature of Derby's public houses which did not lose their collective purpose by the end of the period. Borsay mentions that Bristol had four coffee houses by 1666, Ipswich had two in 1796, Northampton two in 1722 and two each in Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds, but Derby appears to only have had a single coffee house at any one time, and for the mid-part of the century this consisted of a room attached to the Town Hall.[50] Inns and alehouses, on the other hand, were numerous in Derby, an offshoot of the town's importance as a centre of brewing, and were essential to Derby's urban culture throughout the period. Analysis of the *Derby Mercury* between 1732-1799 shows over 100 different inns and alehouses having adverts in the paper.[51] A handful are only referenced as part of a sale of an estate but the overwhelming majority are found advertising meetings for societies and trusts, exhibitions, celebrations, dinners, auctions, feasts, cockfights, and entertainments. Inns and alehouses were the centre of sociability in Derby throughout this period, but they relied on the advertising power of the *Derby Mercury*, part of the 'commercialisation of leisure' described by Plumb and then extended by Clark to include alehouses.[52] Newspapers served as the physical representation of the transfer of news and knowledge that characterised the urban renaissance, to which this chapter turns now.

[48] *Derby Mercury,* 22th October 1789, 19th May 1796 and 3rd October 1799.
[49] Maudlin, 'The Urban Inn', pp. 644-5.
[50] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 145; *Derby Mercury*, 18th November 1768.
[51] Figure taken from the numerous adverts in the *Derby Mercury* throughout this period allowing for the renaming of some inns and alehouses.
[52] Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 234.

The *Derby Mercury* Newspaper

The circulation of newspapers encouraged provincial locals to take a more national outlook by providing them with more regular information about national affairs as news was transported into homes, coffee houses, inns and other places by print.[53] Brewer has described this as the 'bedrock on which British culture was built.'[54] Only four newspapers existed in Derby in the eighteenth century with three of them being short lived. The *Derby Postman* existed from 1717 to 1726, it then morphed into the *Derby Spy and Postman* before failing in the 1730s.[55] The other short-lived Derby newspaper was the Tory *Harrison's Journal*, which became *Harrison's Derby Journal* and then *Harrison's Derby and Nottingham Journal* before disappearing, all within the last six months of 1776. The most successful Derby newspaper was the *Derby Mercury* which has already featured heavily in this thesis. It was founded in 1732 and continued relatively unchallenged until the early 1900s with only three editors during the eighteenth century, all from the Drewry family. This section will show that the tone of the *Mercury* was very much governed by the opinions, political and social, of the editors and that as the only newspaper in the town for much of the period, it was in a position to dictate public sentiment, though not always successfully. Although it attempted to be politically neutral, there is much evidence that it was Whig leaning, particularly during the six-month existence of the Tory *Harrison's Journal*, and became just another tool for the Whig urban elite to maintain dominance over urban life through preferential treatment towards Whig electoral candidates and the promotion of Whig celebrations.

As was common with the contemporary provincial press, the early Derby newspapers were sparse on local information and recycled much material from London and other news sheets. The earliest surviving edition of the *Derby Postman* from January 1721 contained only two items that directly related to local matters, an advertisement for Jeremiah Roe's periwigs, and a piece celebrating the opening of the Derwent Navigation.[56] According to the editor of the *Postman,* this was by choice. He wittily

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[53] Tim Harris, ''Venerating the Honesty of a Tinker': The King's Friends and the Battle for the Allegiance of the Common People in Restoration England', in Harris (ed.), *Politics of the Excluded,* p. 222; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, revised edition (New Haven: 2014), p. 42; Hannah Barker, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: 2002), p. 94.
[54] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 450.
[55] Craven, *Illustrated History of Derby*, p. 128.
[56] *Derby Postman,* 20th January 1721.

explained to his readers, after complaints regarding the lack of news, that his newspaper would provide amusement even when other news was lacking:

> 'When the Mails fail us, and the people are unactive at home, when great Folks are so ill-natured as neither to marry nor die, nor beget Children, we are upon the Search for that scarce Commodity called Wit, which, 'tis well known, is in these our Days as hard to come at in any Week (especially in Derby) as intelligence. On such direful Occasions we are forc'd to stuff our Account with the Preambles of Patents, of Peers created a Month before, with Stories of an old Woman that hang'd heartfelt for Love, and of old rich Rogues that cut their Throats for want of Money: of Horseman and Foot-pads that take the Air on the Roads, etc…If Amusements are both absolutely necessary both for the Health, and the Relief of the Mind, what can be cheaper than this Paper.'[57]

Another reason why local news was sparse was the oral fashion in which news was transferred. Urban areas were very close-knit affairs so gossip was quick to travel through the town thus news would already be out of date by the time it reached print.[58] This is shown by how as the century progressed, the *Mercury* increased from three to five columns on each of four pages, yet the amount of local news never amounted to more than half a page on the very back. The *Mercury* first appeared in 1732, sold by Samuel Drewry (d. 1769) who, like the editor of the *Postman*, set out his editorial guidelines. He specified that he would omit the bills of mortality and the national trade figures, of little relevance to the people of Derby, but would retain the stories of legal trials because they were entertaining. Wisely, for a local newspaper, he also announced that he would avoid local stories so that offence was not given.[59]

Although the *Mercury* claimed to be politically neutral, it did come under scrutiny for political bias. In the run up to elections, it was customary for the prospective candidates to announce their intention to run in the newspaper to appeal to the voters for their support. For the 1734 election, two advertisements appeared on the same day: one announcing the candidatures of two Tories, Sir Nathanial Curzon, 4th Baronet of Kedleston (1676-1758) and Godfrey Clark (c.1684-1734), and the other announcing the

[57] *Derby Postman,* 5th December 1728.
[58] Alfred Wallis, 'A Sketch of the Early History of the Printing Press in Derbyshire', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 3, 1881), p. 147.
[59] *Derby Mercury,* 23rd March 1732.

Whig Lord Charles Cavendish (1704-1783). These notices were identical apart from a small linguistic change. The Curzon/Clark advertisement specified that they were chosen by the 'Principle [sic] Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders of the county' whereas the Cavendish advertisement said that he had the support of the 'great majority of the Principle [sic] Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders of the county'.[60] Samuel Drewry, the editor who only two years previously to this incident had sought to avoid giving offence, was accused of sharing the Curzon/Clark advertisement with supporters of Lord Charles before it was printed, giving the latter the chance to make the identical advertisement with the minor semantic change which suggested Cavendish had more supporters than his opponents. Drewry denied this charge.[61]

The *Mercury* was Derby's only newspaper until 1776 when the short-lived, and heavily Tory, *Harrison's Derby Journal* was founded. Appearing in the aftermath of the heavily contested election of 1775, and the subsequent overturning of the result by the Tory Daniel Parker Coke (1745-1825), the *Journal* made no attempts to obscure its political leanings as the *Mercury* had done four decades before. In its first edition, an anonymous letter was printed directed towards the corporation, accusing them of illegal practices in the recent election, declaring them 'notoriously unjust' and the 'Detestation of every Honest and Public-spirited Man' for making honorary burgesses.[62] *Harrison's Journal* disappeared at the end of 1776 but for that year, they and the *Mercury* were reporting on the same news giving a useful comparison between two politically opposite newspapers. In November of that year, the British victory at New York during the American Revolution was celebrated by the people of Derby with parades, bells, and bonfires, but these celebrations were only reported on in *Harrison's Journal* and not the *Mercury*.[63] As well as this, meetings of the Tory Independent Club were regularly advertised in the *Journal* but again, not in the *Mercury*.[64] This creates the assumption that other Tory organisations, celebrations, and events went unmentioned in the *Mercury* in the rest of the century, denying them representation in the local press. It's worth noting that the *Journal* only survived for six months and in the *Mercury* shortly after, the editor noted that his readership had increased during those months, rather

[60] *Derby Mercury,* 14th February 1734.
[61] *Derby Mercury,* 21st February 1734.
[62] *Harrison's Derby Journal,* 23rd August 1776.
[63] *Harrison's Derby Journal,* 8th November 1776.
[64] *Harrison's Derby Journal,* 14th November 1776.

than declined, though he did not link it to the decline of the *Journal*.[65] The *Mercury* could therefore affect public opinion with its political bias towards the Whigs but a charge levelled at the paper by a reader showed it could affect events in other ways. Chapter three showed how riots could be caused by an increase in the price of basic food stuffs and a letter sent to the paper in the aftermath of the 1766 riots placed the blame for the rise in prices at the feet of the *Mercury*. The author of the letter suggested that the constant reporting by the *Mercury* on food riots elsewhere in the country and the interference in markets caused the rise in prices that led to rioting.[66]

In 1792, the paper was at the fore front of the anti-slavery movement in Derby, imploring its readers to support a public opposition to the slave trade from the town.[67] This is on top of the countless reports of charitable donations and benefactions. If charity was a chance for the well-off to promote their morality, then the newspaper was the audience and was able to direct aid to where it thought it was most needed through imitation and coercion. By imploring other towns to adopt such charitable measures, the newspaper also became a way of promoting the town to a readership that covered the towns and villages around Derbyshire and further afield. When discussing the widening of Market Head, a 'narrow and dangerous Passage', the newspaper lauded the project for rendering it 'much more commodious and safe' while adding 'Ornament to the Town'.[68] After the music festival of 1788, the paper celebrated that the cultural soil was broken and the 'vegetative Qualities not having been exhausted, perhaps the riches crops may be procured. The present Instances is encouraging; and that it may lead to future Experiments seems at present the general Wish.'[69] That said, the *Mercury* was also not afraid to criticise the town when it felt it would provoke action. In 1792, a system of watchmen was created to police the town as part of the Paving and Lighting act of that year, but because the paving and lighting had not been started, the *Mercury* felt that it was like 'building a palace in the midst of a bog'.[70]

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[65] *Derby Mercury,* 10th January 1777.
[66] *Derby Mercury,* 14th November 1766.
[67] *Derby Mercury,* 23rd February 1792. Alasdair Kean, *Anti-slavery in Derby and its Region* (Derby: 2007), pp. 14-15.
[68] *Derby Mercury,* 5th November 1773.
[69] *Derby Mercury,* 11th September 1788.
[70] *Derby Mercury,* 12th January 1792.

The newspaper press 'relied on the tenor of public sentiment to determine its own politics' but what the evidence above regarding the *Mercury* shows is that the political stance of its editors determined the content of the paper. Also, this section has shown that the local press was not just a passive observer of events but was an active part of shaping Derby's cultural and political landscape. Therefore, as is the wider theme of this thesis, the pressure for change came from a select few rather than wider public sentiment.

Assemblies, Theatres, and Sociability

The increased presence of the rural nobility on the urban scene by the start of the eighteenth century caused a switch in this period where the 'civility and gentility' of upper class culture was no longer centred on the country house or the royal court, but was now found in urban centres, developing the very idea of politeness that 'could not have been developed without the concomitant growth of urban society.'[71] Those in the upper classes, chasing or maintaining the ideal of the refined and polite person, would need to see and be seen in these arenas of sociability which in turn became social enclaves separate from the middling sorts culture of the inns and alehouses. The integration of refined spaces into provincial society was not a standardised process and was based around the town function and the attractiveness of the town to those who would be the primary users, the 'fashionable residents and the neighbouring gentry'.[72] County towns such as Derby were also desirable in the winter when the rural gentry could escape the cold and often inhospitable areas of the countryside in which they resided.[73] For the town to be attractive, it had to be a place where 'the most affluent could engage in conspicuous consumption, and recuperate, recreate and reside in some elegance.'[74] Therefore, the presence of an assembly rooms and a theatre, of which Derby had both by the end of the century, was seen as the marks of a genteel town. This section will discuss the attempts to make Derby a genteel leisure town through the patronage of the rural elite for the upper-class cultural pursuits of assemblies, theatre performances and music festivals. It will argue that attempts to make Derby into a

[71] Rosemary Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (Vol 12, 2002), p. 355.
[72] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 154.
[73] Peter Borsay, 'The Landed Elite and Provincial Towns in Britain 1660-1800', in *The Georgian Group Journal* (Vol. 13, 2003), p. 288.
[74] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 28.

leisure town, by any degree, failed due to social and cultural differences between the rural and urban elite, as 'class-based social divisions' led to a 'decline in the number and quality of the company' attending both the winter and summer urban leisure seasons.[75] As the rural nobility began to remove themselves from Derby, the urban elite did not replace them in patronising the culture they left behind.

The assemblies held in Derby were characteristic of the rising prosperity of the town and they enabled the 'client and professional man or tradesman to meet, with benefit to both.'[76] Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) advised a young apothecary starting out in business that the card and dancing assemblies were a good way to meet and socialise with clients.[77] The holding of assemblies were usually governed by the urban calendar so a town's feast day, a local election, an assizes, or a race meeting was often partnered with a series of assemblies, balls and ordinaries to take advantage of the influx of polite society to the town.[78] Those who feared the 'potentially pernicious effects of cultural pleasure', on the other hand, branded assemblies as a hotbed of 'sexual intrigue and gossip'.[79]

Derby's first purpose-built assembly rooms was opened just off the marketplace in 1730 and due to the survival of the rules for attending one of the balls held there, we can see how socially restrictive access to these events could be. The rules were attached to a ladies' assembly held in 1745 which was organised by ladies from the neighbouring rural gentry families such as the Everys, Mundy, and Fitzherbert families and were printed and displayed because they had been broken at previous balls. They range from the quite general, such as rules barring the attendance of attorney's clerks and shopkeepers to being quite specific such as dictating the dress of the female attendees who were not allowed to 'dance in a long white apron', dance in a coat without the leave of a lady of the assembly, and to pay 2s 6d if they were a young lady in a mantua. Appearance and income were major indicators of polite social status with the judgement on someone's genteel nature coming as much down to their dress as to

[75] Joyce Ellis, 'Regional and County Centre 1700-1840' in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, p698.
[76] Craven, *Illustrated History of Derby*, p. 119.
[77] Clark, *Clubs and Societies*, pp. 151-2.
[78] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 494.
[79] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 73.

anything else. Of course, as we have seen with the term gentlemen itself, anyone wishing to be deemed 'polite' must thus simply look 'polite'. John Mackay, writing about Preston's grand ball of 1762, noted how 'every person who went properly dressed was admitted' suggesting that there were ways around the strict rule providing you could maintain an air of gentility.[80] In Derby, so restrictive were the rules that a rival assembly was established in the 1740s to accommodate all those who did not qualify for entry and, to the lament of Lady Jane Coke of Longford (1706-1761), the exclusion of so many males due to their trade left ladies dancing together. Thus, the seemingly arbitrary attendance rules could also hinder the success of the event.[81] This example also highlights that by excluding general tradesmen, there were very few men eligible to attend suggesting a lack of gentry presence in Derby at this time.

By the 1760s, the old assembly room was deemed inadequate for high society and a new one was built in 1763, initiated by the William Cavendish (1720-1764), 4th Duke of Devonshire, designed by Washington Shirley (1722-1778), 5th Earl Ferrers, and built by Joseph Pickford (1734-1782) through subscriptions from urban and rural gentry.[82] All subscribers became stock owners and were granted annual admittance suggesting that the subscriber lists serves as a good idea of who attended the balls there.[83] The building itself added to the prospect of Derby's urban centre, providing a 'handsome external silhouette' directly onto the marketplace where it sat giving Derby's polite culture a physical representation, though the old rooms continued as a place for schooling, lectures, exhibitions and performances as the 'old assembly rooms'.[84] Not only were the new assembly rooms indicative of the wider national trend of erecting purpose-built establishments to accommodate polite society in urban areas, it was built in the neo-classical style to set itself amongst the very best of Georgian assembly rooms, such as those at York and Bath.[85] The 1763 assembly rooms were therefore built as much to attract new visitors as they were to accommodate resident gentry.

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[80] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 155.
[81] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 134.
[82] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 137; Maxwell Craven and Michael Stanley, *The Derbyshire Country House: 1* (Ashbourne, 2001) p. 20.
[83] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 136.
[84] Girouard, *English Town*, p. 139; *Derby Mercury,* 23rd August 1765, 26th September 1766, 3rd December 1795, and 20th March 1794.
[85] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 159.

The subscription list for the building of the new assembly rooms shows that it was almost entirely supported by rural nobility with only a handful from the urban elite. Of the £2458.10s subscribed, £1,100 came from the Duke of Devonshire alone. There were several subscribers who had political interests in the borough as serving as MP or by providing a family member as one, such as Sir Henry Harpur (1739-1789), 6th Baronet of Calke Abbey, Godfrey Bagnall Clarke (1742-1774), German Pole (d.1765) and Wenman Coke (1717-1776), plus those rural gentry residing in the immediate vicinity of the town such as George Venables-Vernon (1708-1780), 1st Baron Vernon and Robert Mead Wilmot (1731-1793). Only Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782) and John Gisborne (c.1717-1779) appear as representatives of the urban elite. In total there were only 39 subscribers, showing that it had a much more limited attraction than other improvement projects and shows the interest shown by the local rural nobility in improving Derby's urban culture.[86]

As well as assemblies, theatrical performances and the building of a purpose-built theatre have also been placed at the centre of the urban renaissance as a sign of increasing urban gentility. Before 1750, theatre productions and music festivals were held at inns, such as the White Hart in Derby, in temporary structures built for that purpose, or in private dwellings such as Mr Tyrell's where 'minuets, cotillion, and country dancing' were held and which became home to Dr Herbert's Company of Comedians in the 1730s.[87] Herbert's company were just one of many performance groups who travelled to Derby to delight the masses. In 1738, Mr River's Company of Comedians were 'at the Theatre in this Town', presumably that at the White Hart.[88] Widow Rayner's company of rope dancers were resident in the town for over a month in 1749, eventually extending their stay so as to perform during race week.[89] As was the case with assemblies, the Derby inns were not grand enough to attract gentry visitors so productions in Derby first moved to the Shire Hall and the Old Assembly Rooms before moving to a new theatre on Bold Lane built by Joseph Pickford in 1773.[90] The first

[86] Maxwell Craven, *The Derby Townhouse* (Derby: 1987), p. 119.
[87] Henry Greatorex, *A Paper on the Theatre in Derby* (1975, DLSL BA792), p. 5.
[88] *Derby Mercury,* 21st December 1738.
[89] *Derby Mercury,* 11th August 1749.
[90] Arthur Davison, *Derby: Its Rise and Progress* (London: 1906), p. 108; Greatorex, *Theatre in Derby*, p. 9.

performance was timed with race week to ensure that a gentry audience was readily available thus again placing culture on the urban calendar.[91]

The rural gentry were conspicuous patrons of the theatre in the town, often organising their own performance. In 1769, a show called 'The Busy Body', as well as a pantomime called 'The Witches' were performed for the benefit of Washington Shirley at the theatre in the marketplace (it is unclear to which building this is referring to).[92] In 1765, at the theatre in Full street, 'The Jealous Wife' alongside a farce called 'High Life Below Stairs', was put on at the behest of Sir Henry (1739-1789) and Lady Frances Harpur (1744-1825) to which all were admitted free and treated to wine, cake, sweetmeats and other treats, though exactly who was included in the invitation is unclear.[93] Unlike the assemblies, with their entry barriers based on dress and heritage, the theatre did not have any such restrictions other than cost of tickets which were tiered depending on the location of the seat. When Duravan's company played in Full Street, tickets were two shillings for the pit and one shilling for the gallery.[94] When the new theatre was open in 1773, it contained a box which added another tier of entry price of two shillings and six pence for the box whilst the pit and gallery cost remained the same.[95] The tiered entry prices for the theatre serves as a microcosm of Derby's urban culture as multiple social groups were present yet financially segregated.

The music festivals held in Derby at the very end of the eighteenth century are a good example of attempts by the rural elite to increase the sophistication of the town's urban culture but success was limited as what was meant to be a bi-annual event starting in 1788, only happened twice before the end of the century. Musical performances had been common in eighteenth-century Derby, mostly due to Charles Denby (1752-1792), organist of All Saints' Church, who held annual concerts starting in 1745 when the church received its new organ.[96] It was usual for such music festivals to be held in churches and there's evidence that they were a way of attracting dissenters to Anglican churches with 'devotional music in a liturgical setting with the musicians and singers

[91] Craven, *Illustrated History of Derby*, p. 125-6.
[92] *Derby Mercury,* 17th February 1769.
[93] *Derby Mercury,* 13th December 1765.
[94] *Derby Mercury,* 25th April 1760.
[95] *Derby Mercury,* 31st January 1777.
[96] *Derby Mercury,* 10th May 1745.

expressing sacred ideas.'[97] Tickets were always half a crown, the same price as the most expensive of the theatre tickets, and the performance was always accompanied with a ball. Concerts from then on became another staple of the town's social calendar, always being mentioned as part of the festivities that accompanied race week. Even though there were annual concerts in Derby and the company at one concert in 1770 were referred to as numerous and brilliant, a commentator in 1781 described the town as being 'remarkable for the Want of musical Taste.'[98] Until the grand music festival of 1788, local musical performances were typically quite small-scale affairs, or were attached to other events when the town was already filled with gentry.[99] Ultimately, the music festival failed to become a staple of the social calendar, highlighting, as with the other sections of this chapter, that Derby's urban culture was aimed too much towards the middling sorts for gentrified culture to be successful.

The grand music festival of 1788, held at All Saints', offered multiple performances a day over four days, costing six pence per event. Subscribers could pay to attend multiple performances and subscribers and non-subscribers were separated from each other at performances through the use of separate entrances.[100] The list of directors contained names such as Charles Stanhope (1753-1829), 3rd Earl of Harrington, George Venables-Vernon (1735-1813), 2nd Baron Vernon, and Sir Robert Burdett (1716-1797), 4th Baronet of Foremark highlighting the same level of rural nobility backing as the assemblies, with the only name not connected to a country seat being Reverend Charles Hope (d. 1798), who was curate of All Saints'.[101] So certain were they of success that the advert in the *Mercury* predicted that 'Derby is expected to be more brilliant than on any former Occasions'.[102] Due to either a lack of interest, or expense, another festival was not attempted until 1791 which was postponed.[103] It was not until 1793 that the 'long-intended' music festival returned to All Saints' 'said to be the best CHURCH in the kingdom for a performance of this nature' though prices were significantly greater than

[97] William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord* (London: 2001), p. 154.
[98] *Derby Mercury,* 7th September 1770 and 8th September 1781.
[99] Sturges, *Cultural Life*, p. 24.
[100] *Derby Mercury,* 7th August 1788.
[101] *Grand Music Festival, 1788 Programme* (DLSL LS323D).
[102] *Derby Mercury,* 28th August 1788.
[103] *Derby Mercury,* 25th August 1791.

the 1788 festival.[104] The subscription list for the 1793 festival, compared to that of 1788, does show a more even mix of rural and urban gentry. The directors of the 1788 festival were all included and William Cavendish (1748-1811), 5th Duke of Devonshire and members of the Wilmot, Pole, and Sitwell families were added alongside members of the urban elite such as Daniel Parker Coke, John Crompton (1753-1834) and Thomas Borrow (later Borough, d.1844).[105] There is no further mention of the festival in *Mercury* suggesting it 'passed off quietly' and another festival was not held until 1810 after which they became more common. From this date they were often held to raise money for the Derbyshire Infirmary rather than an attempt to gentrify Derby's urban culture.[106]

The music festival was not the only aspect of local urban culture to experience difficulties in Derby as attempts to establish at a fashionable walk and a spa were not embraced by the town. According to *Pigot's Directory* of 1822-23 there were 'a variety of agreeable walks, where the inhabitants may enjoy a salutary exercise', such as those on the borough's common land, but a purpose-built walk, in the same model as York's riverside promenade and considered part of the town's polite cultural offering, never materialised.[107] A spa was founded on Abbey Street in 1733 by Dr William Chauncey which was taken over in 1739 by Edward Elcock who claimed that customers would be provided with 'constant attendance' and 'the same accommodations of Coffee, Tea, &c. in the Long Room as usual'.[108] One year later the spa had been taken over again by John Sheppardson and then a year after that Samuel Greatorex had taken charge.[109] This suggests that the spa was not a very successful business venture, probably because the waters do not appear to have had any special or distinctive qualities unlike other spas in the county.[110]

This section has shown that there were many attempts made by the rural gentry to create a 'polite' cultural atmosphere in eighteenth-century Derby, but the town never

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[104] *Derby Mercury,* 4th July 1793; Sturges, *Cultural Life*, p. 28.
[105] *Derby Mercury,* 8th August 1793.
[106] Paul Sturges, 'Harmony and Good Company: The Emergence of Musical Performance in the Eighteenth-century', in *Music Review* (39, ¾, August-November 1978), p. 193.
[107] Philip Riden (ed.), *Derbyshire Directories 1781-1824* (Chesterfield: 2006), p. 194.
[108] Craven, *Illustrated History of Derby*, p. 126.
[109] *Derby Mercury,* 6th April 1738, 31st May 1739, and 15th May 1740.
[110] Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: Science and Culture in British Urban Society 1700-1850* (Manchester: 2009), p. 23.

came close to becoming a centre of leisure and culture as Lichfield, Matlock, and Buxton were. It is perhaps because of the proximity to these leisure towns that this was the case. The assemblies, theatre and the music festivals were heavily patronised by the rural gentry, yet they had a mixed rate of success, never reaching the level of cultural influence on the town achieved by middling sorts cultures of clubs, societies, and science, which will be discussed below.

Enlightenment Associations and Scientific Culture

A distinctive kind of society that emerged in urban centres during the eighteenth century were the philosophical, political, and literary associations and Derby had at least three such societies active between 1770 and 1815.[111] They were partly stimulated by growing interests in the sciences amongst the middling sorts and urban gentry, although most societies 'were dominated by the elite of that class', fostered by visits from itinerant lecturers in natural philosophy but also practical utilitarian interests stimulated by local industries and manufactures.[112] This section will examine Derby's scientific culture, evident in regular visits of travelling lecturers and the creation of the Derby Philosophical Society.

Figure 7: *A Philosopher Giving that Lecture on the Orrery, in which a Lamp is put in the Place of the Sun*. Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), Oil on canvas, exhibited 1766 (Derby Museums Collection).

[111] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*.
[112] Robert J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and the British Urban Elites, 1780-1850 – An Analysis', in *The Historical Journal* (26:1, March 1983), p. 96.

The paintings of Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), and in particular his conversation pieces, show that not only did Derby have a strong scientific culture, but that it was also more socially inclusive than the other cultures in the town. In his most famous pieces, 'A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery' (1766) (figure 7) and 'The Bird in the Air Pump' (1768), Wright presents scenes and subjects that may have been familiar to many Derby residents in the 1760s and also highlights how such lectures were open to men, women, and children. There are references in the *Derby Mercury* to scientific lectures as early as 1739 when William Griffiss started a second subscription to a course in experimental philosophy for a numerous company of Gentlemen and Ladies after the first had been so successful.[113] John Arden (c.1720-1791), a regular lecturer in the town, claimed that for his lectures, the 'fair sex constitute so agreeable a Part'.[114] For his 1743 series of lectures, Arden offered each subscriber the chance to 'introduce a Lady' highlighting perhaps that women themselves could not be subscribers or could not attend without a subscribing male. To these women, Arden promised that 'all uncommon Terms will be as much as possible avoided, and such as cannot without Affection [sic] be rejected, always explain'd'.[115] He did receive immediate criticism for this though in the *Mercury* where a letter appeared from a 'female philosopher' which suggested that this dumbing down for the female audience members was no more needed than it was for the male audience. Arden maintained a presence in Derby, lecturing in the town in 1739, 1743, 1749, and 1752.[116]

A forerunner philosophical society was referred to in the *Derby Mercury* in 1779 as celebrating its anniversary by dining at the New Inn, the landlord of which was related to the artist Joseph Wright of Derby, but evidence is lacking. The more famous Derby Philosophical Society was founded in 1783 by Erasmus Darwin, two years after he had moved to the town. In 1782, Darwin had told fellow Lunar Society member Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) that he was 'cut off from the milk of science' which suggests that the earlier society was either now defunct, or not to his liking.[117] Membership of the Philosophical Society was primarily made up of medical men, gentry, and

[113] *Derby Mercury,* 29th November 1739.
[114] *Derby Mercury,* 8th September 1749.
[115] *Derby Mercury,* 6th January 1743.
[116] *Derby Mercury,* 10th January 1752.
[117] Desmond King-Hele (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin* (Cambridge: 2007), p. 214.

manufacturers and the society dealt with all aspects of scientific culture.[118] By the time of Darwin's death in 1802, the society remained a private institution which had formed a library but had not established a public forum for the sciences in the town.[119] This was mainly because the cost of joining, £1.1s for the year, was prohibitive, with only a handful of members meeting regularly. Many were non-resident and some individuals with strong scientific interests appear to have never joined.[120] It was not until the Derby Literary and Philosophical Society was founded in 1808 that a local association sought to establish a public platform for the sciences in the town, with a regular lecture series and a laboratory.[121] It was also one of those societies which drew particular political scrutiny during the 1790s as such societies were sometimes viewed as having reformist sympathies although Thompson suggests that literary and scientific associations that were well established by 1792, such as Derby's, were likely to survive the hysteria of that period.[122]

Erasmus Darwin was also a member of 'one of the earliest radical societies' formed, the Derby Society for Political Information, alongside a number of Philosophical Society members such as William Strutt (1756-1830) and Samuel Fox (1765-1851).[123] 'Except for a few rationalists and deists' the group was mostly nonconformists and had aims of 'full, free and frequently elected representation' though with no hints of social reforms.[124] The ambiguity of their aims was said to have come from the fact that the radicalness of the members ranged from mild to extreme.[125] The society, like most radical groups of the time, was largely a middle class venture which sought to empower the working classes and participants were drawn mostly from manufacturing, journalism, and medical professions with 'few members [who] derived their livelihood from land.'[126]

[118] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers,* p. 69.
[119] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*, p. 81.
[120] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers,* p. 82.
[121] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*, pp. 133-4.
[122] Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: 1991), p. 130.
[123] Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men* (London: 2002), p. 455.
[124] E. Fearn, 'The Derbyshire Reform Societies', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 88, 1968), pp. 48-50.
[125] Fearn, 'Derbyshire Reform Societies', p. 50.
[126] Fearn, 'Derbyshire Reform Societies', p. 48.

The group that best characterises the links between societies, enlightenment, and urbanity is that of the freemasons. They too drew their members from amongst the middling sorts tradesmen and professionals as well as the rural nobility. Derby's first masonic lodge existed between 1732 and 1777, based at the Virgin's Inn and then the Royal Oak, but references to masonry in the Derby Mercury first appear in an isolated account of a procession in 1758 where the 'ancient Society of Free and Accepted Masons' walked from Lodge House to St Alkmund's church for a sermon by Reverend Henry Cantrell (c.1684-1762), and then back to the lodge for dinner.[127] Only one document appears to have survived from this first lodge which shows William Sparkes being admitted to the lodge in 1766 by Samuel Brown, master, Richard Rutland, senior Warden, Henry Pratt, junior warden, and Thomas Greasley, the secretary.[128] Unfortunately it is difficult to trace these names without a contemporary trade directory (1790-1 is the earliest available) but perhaps their absence from the newspaper, parish records, poll books, and subscription lists suggests they held a middle to lower position in urban society.

The next references to masonry in Derby come with the Tyrian Lodge which met yearly from 1785 at the George inn though their everyday activity has been linked with the Tyger inn in the Cornmarket, built by Joseph Pickford. The first meeting was attended by lodge founder Dr John Holis Pigot (1757-1794), a member of the 1792 Paving and Lighting commission and the Derby Philosophical Society; Benjamin Oakes (c.1746-1785), liquor dealer of the Nagg's Head; James Brewer (d. 1824), hat maker; John Moss (d. 1788), draper and tailor; Henry Cater, maltster and silk throwster; Roland Parke, and Henry Pratt who is the only apparent link with the defunct Virgin's Inn lodge.[129] Other traceable names from the records of the Tyrian Lodge include Edward Ward, the town clerk, master in 1793, Daniel Parker Coke, MP for Derby and Nottingham who was master in 1794, and the chemist alderman Henry Browne (c.1759-1831), owner of a silk mill, who was master in 1798, a year before he first became mayor.[130] There was also a weighty clergy presence in the available records. Dr Pigot was replaced by Rev Charles Shuttleworth (later Holden) (1750-1821) in 1790, and an address sent to Prince George

[127] James O'Manton, *Early Freemasonry in Derbyshire with Special Reference to the Tyrion Lodge, No 253* (Manchester: 1913), pp. 6 and 8; *Derby Mercury,* 30th June 1758.
[128] O'Manton, *Freemasonry in Derbyshire*, p. 9.
[129] O'Manton, *Freemasonry in Derbyshire*, p. 21.
[130] *Derby Mercury,* 2nd October 1794 and 3rd May 1798.

in 1793 from the lodge was co-authored by Rev. George Greaves (1746-1828) and Rev. Colin Crawford.[131] The masonic lodges in Derby appear therefore to maintain the same level of social diversity as other societies of the period with a middling sorts main body.

Although Derby's philosophical and political societies had a much more limited membership and clientele than the other cultural phenomena discussed in this chapter, they were much stimulated by the town's already existing public culture. They were largely held in inns and alehouses thus thriving from the associational culture that those institutions established in the town. The membership of the philosophical and political societies was drawn from manufacturers and the professions, who also formed the core of the urban elite which also explains their success and survival. Those higher up the social ladder may have been supportive of the scientific research proposed by the Philosophical Society, but as occurred in Leicester, the French Revolution caused philosophical and reform societies to become associated with each other by opponents of reform and avoided by a nervous ruling class. Also, although the aims espoused by the societies spoke of the betterment of those socially below them, they were never more than a middle-class vehicle for agitation with the usual barriers such as cost and education in place to limit membership. Derby's sporting culture in the eighteenth century is perhaps the best example of cultural interaction between the urban classes as they were held in open spaces and were not socially restrictive, although attempts were made, which will be discussed in the next section.

Urban Sports and Recreations

The assemblies and theatre productions mentioned previously were able to restrict attendees through economic barriers of cost or social conventions such as dress and manner, whereas sporting events, such as football and horse racing, involved all classes. A common theme in eighteenth-century recreations was that the upper classes began to take more notice of lower-class pastimes, with attempts being made to curtail or ban the more degenerate recreations, particularly those involving animals such as cock fighting and bull-baiting. This was part of the protection of the 'exclusive nature of a more inclusive elite' though the cultural differentiation never truly separated polite and

[131] O'Manton, *Freemasonry in Derby*, pp. 24 and 34.

popular society as the two interacted in both upper- and lower-class recreations. [132] This section will first look at football and animal-based sports and recreations, which were often, though by no means exclusively, the preserve of the lower classes, and how they were challenged and curtailed by the ruling elites. Horse racing will then be analysed as it often involved all the urban and rural classes and became an essential part of the urban cultural calendar but this did not protect it from a steady decline as the rural gentry removed their influence from the borough, in concurrence with many of the examples given in this thesis.[133]

Shrovetide football in Derby, a long-established annual event, completely overtook the town each year as the parishes of All Saints' and St Peter's went head-to-head in the streets, trying to get a ball either to a mill wheel on Nuns Green at the north end of town or to a stone post in the south end, a distance of over a mile. Each side could be as much as 1,000 people strong.[134] This made it largely unavoidable to anyone residing in the town as the principal streets of the borough lay in the middle of the carnage. The markets closed, trading was halted, and all property in the streets likely to be impacted by events was closed and boarded up with the more well-off residents likely to vacate the town altogether. Opponents of football were found across both sides of the social divide. In 1731 there was a concerted effort by the then mayor of Derby, Isaac Borrow, to supress it, with one man being arrested though this does not appear to have deterred players.[135] In 1747, mayor Humphrey Booth (d. 1755) tried to stop the game as he wished to prevent riots and foreigners coming to town during a cattle contagion.[136] In 1796, John Streep was drowned whilst playing the game causing a meeting of jurors to petition the mayor, corporation, and justices to have it banned. Although the response from those petitioned was to support a ban, they hoped that the players would voluntarily stop rather than being forced.[137] The next year, a note from an unidentified magistrate submitted to the *Derby Mercury* called football 'a disgrace to humanity' and destructive for the morals' but again it continued unabated.[138] Golby and Purdue have

[132] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 300.
[133] Mike Huggins, 'Urbs in Rure: Race-grounds, Grandstands and the Commercialized Consumption of Urban Leisure, 1750-1805' in *Urban History* (49:1, February 2022), p48.
[134] John M. Golby and A. William Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd* (London: 1984), p. 23.
[135] William Hutton, *The History of Derby*, 2nd edition with additions by J.B. Nichols (London: 1817), p. 39.
[136] *Derby Mercury,* 27th February 1747.
[137] *Derby Mercury,* 18th February 1796.
[138] *Derby Mercury,* 23rd February 1797.

suggested that authorities tolerated such events not only because they were also part of the community in which these festivities were cemented, but also as a 'half-conscious recognition of the necessity of a safety valve to release tensions' built up over the working year.[139] When it was finally banned in the 1830s, the primary reason given was the increase in population which made it uncontrollable, rather than any sense of what was socially acceptable or not.[140]

Sports involving animals also came under scrutiny during the period as they became increasingly abhorrent to enlightened thinkers and the sensibilities of the new age. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, cock fighting and bull-baiting in particular were deemed 'insufficiently refined' causing men of taste to 'neglect or condemn them as vulgar or cruel'.[141] Women, often from dissenting backgrounds, were also central but as advocates for animal welfare rather than against plebeian culture.[142] It was not the case that such plebian culture was swept aside as a side effect of urban improvement. Griffin argues that although bull-baiting and football were supressed, large civic fairs, itinerant quacks, and performance and musicians occupying urban space continued into the nineteenth century.[143] Cock fighting, as shown earlier in this chapter, was common in Derby throughout the period averaging over one event per year from 1740-1780 as well as the usual cock fights organised as part of race week. Bull-baiting, though less common than cock fights, was also present in the region, taking place in Derby's marketplace and at Tutbury, Staffordshire, only a few miles from Derby, where men of Derbyshire and Staffordshire would attempt to chase a bull over a bridge and on to their side of the river where it would be killed and eaten by the victorious team.[144] Attempts were made in the late-eighteenth century to have both of them banned in the town but were only partially successful. Attempts to abolish cock fighting started in 1760 when a

[139] Golby and Purdue, *Civilisation of the Crowd*, p. 23.
[140] Davison, *Derby: Its Rise and Progress*, p. 213.
[141] Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700*-1850 (Cambridge: 1981), p.89; Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. xx.; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: 1983).
[142] ; Diana Donald, *Women Against Cruelty: Protection if Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: 2019).
[143] Emma Griffin, 'the "Urban Renaissance" and the Mob: Rethinking Civic Improvement over the Long Eighteenth Century', in David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (eds.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: 2011), p. 57.
[144] Borsay, 'Urban Ritual and Ceremony', pp. 234-5.

letter was sent to the *Derby Mercury* for that purpose but to no avail.[145] In 1781, two years after the Tutbury bull running had been abolished, a man died during bull-baiting in the marketplace, and the editor of the *Mercury* urged the magistrates of the town to ban it as well as the 'throwing of cocks'.[146] References to bull baiting disappear from the *Mercury* after this entry, either through its successful abolition or due to the editor refusing to report on such efforts, whereas cock fighting in Derby continued to the end of the period, as it did in other areas of the region. One possible reason for this is that many cock fights were advertised for 'gentlemen', such as a match in 1750 between gentlemen of Staffordshire and Scarsdale at the Angel in Derby, and therefore it was possibly gentrified enough to survive with Borsay arguing it became 'increasingly the preserve of a hard core of sporting gentry.[147]

Horse racing has become a major signifier of the development of eighteenth-century sporting leisure and one which, in theory, attracted all social groups. The horses were owned by the gentry, the races were gambled on by all the social groups, whilst the prizes were often provided by the urban ruling elite, such as at York, to help attract gentry visitors.[148] Together they made races an essential part of the urban social calendar with assemblies, dances, cock fights, and entertainment being organised around them to create a social holiday. An urban racecourse could rely on a catchment area of support plus the mobilisation of essential trades such as food and drink, saddlery, blacksmiths, accommodation, and entertainment.[149] To succeed, races needed 'other urban entertainments to retain visitors', enough entrants, sufficient prize money, and an 'interest in racing amongst its elite and public social worlds to make racing too profitable to resist.'[150] Derby races were successful if they enjoyed the support and patronage of the aristocracy and rural nobility, with the Cavendish family being the most important attendees, but they had interests at Newmarket where they owned a stable so their attendance was not guaranteed.[151] The audience for Derby races was also affected by the proximity of Nottingham whose race meetings were noted as being one

[145] *Derby Mercury,* 15th February 1760.
[146] Derby Mercury, 26th February 1779 and 4th October 1781.
[147] *Derby Mercury*, 2nd March 1750; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 178; Adrian Harvey, *Beginnings of a Commercial Sporting Culture in Britain, 1793-1850* (Aldershot: 2004), p. 2; Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge: 1981), p. 56.
[148] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 182.
[149] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 185.
[150] Huggins, 'Rus in Urbe', p. 48.
[151] Borsay*, Urban Renaissance,* p. 187.

of the greatest social events of the northern calendar.[152] A race also needed a 'specific shire, or a portion of one, on whose backing it could depend' but Derbyshire's primary race meetings were held at Chesterfield which had twice yearly meetings and also had the Dukes of Devonshire as a master of ceremonies.[153]

Race weeks became a celebration around which other events were organised both to attract gentry tourists and to make sure they were entertained whilst in town, which could be lucrative to the town's economy.[154] Thomas Bennet (c.1695-1770) noted that the staff of his silk mill were likely to only work half days during the combined assize and race week of 1748 and went as far as asking his employers if they approved of 'work-people playing more, during the Race time' given that they 'wou'd be glad to play whole Days' as there had not been a race held in the town for '16 or 18 years or more'.[155] The most common arrangement saw assemblies held every night of race week, with ordinaries and cock fights as well as the occasional boxing match or theatre production. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the newspaper reports on the Derby races show it to be well attended, comparing well with the neighbouring towns. The crowd for the 1733 races were said to be as large as the most recent Nottingham race week with an abundance of coaches being the measuring stick.[156] In 1737, there was again 'as grand an Appearance as is usually seen at Nottingham races' and in 1749, the races experienced a 'great Concourse of People each Day' with 'grand Assemblies, and other publick Diversions each Evening'.[157]

A 'vast Concourse of People' though was no guarantee of success as financial support, and horses, were required for a successful race week. In 1755, the last race of the week was cancelled due to only one horse being entered, which also happened in 1760, 1785, and 1789.[158] This was likely the effect of the national downturn in horse racing in the period which saw a minimum limit on race prizes.[159] In 1733 there were five races with prizes ranging from £5 to 100 guineas, but after 1749, the standard was two to three

[152] Geoffrey Holmes and Daniel Szechi, *The Age of Oligarchy* (New York: 1993), pp. 211-2.
[153] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, pp. 189-192 and 357.
[154] Huggins, 'Urbs in Rure', p. 48.
[155] *Letter from Thomas Bennet to LW & Co,* 1st August 1748 (DBYMU 1992-134).
[156] *Derby Mercury,* 16th August 1733.
[157] *Derby Mercury,* 25th August 1749.
[158] *Derby Mercury,* 22nd August 1755.
[159] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, pp. 183-4.

races with prize pots of £50 each.[160] Due to dwindling interest, it was determined that for the 1787 races a sweepstake subscription would be opened up to ensure both the financial support and physical presence of the local gentry.[161] The subscription lists look very similar to that of the music festivals of the same period, with the Cavendish, Pole and Sitwell families being prominent but it also included urban gentry such as the Crompton, Lowe, and Bateman families.[162]

Although a regular feature in Derby's cultural calendar, the races do not appear established enough to have survived the increase in minimum prize money with races being cancelled due to lack of horses in 1782, 1785, and 1789.[163] Although the crowds appeared to have retained the same gentry presence throughout, the attendee lists pale in comparison to nearby Nottingham that often welcomed royalty to their races leaving Derby very much a minor assemblage in comparison. Nottingham though still suffered a decline in the 1790s due to the poor standard of available lodgings.[164] Even bigger towns struggled with Norwich and Leeds holding no races at times in the 1760s and Bristol having no races at all.[165] Also, towards the end of the century, and consistent with the other cultural pursuits mentioned above, the races required the interest of the urban elites to replace the interest of the rural gentry whose interests were elsewhere.

Conclusion

At no point in the eighteenth century could Derby be described as a cultural centre compared to Lichfield, Tunbridge Wells, and Bath, but the borough was a centre of the middling sorts culture found in inns, clubs, and societies. For example, there were public events such as concerts, music festivals, theatrical performances and courses of lectures on different subjects and various associations such as philosophical societies patronised by manufacturers, professionals, and urban gentry. There were some limitations in genteel culture due to the retreating rural gentry and the industrial and manufacturing character of the town.

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[160] *Derby Mercury,* 26th July 1733.
[161] *Derby Mercury,* 21st September 1786.
[162] *Derby Mercury,* 29th December 1791 and 15th November 1792.
[163] *Derby Mercury*, 12th September 1782, 18th August 1785, and 20th August 1789.
[164] Huggins, 'Rus in Urbe', p. 48.
[165] Huggins, 'Rus in Urbe', p. 51.

The increase in the influence of the middling sorts in Derby on the other hand gave strength to the middling cultures of newspapers, societies, and scientific lectures which developed Derby's enlightenment culture by the late-eighteenth century. The rules for the Derby assembly of 1745 show how some members of the middling sorts, such as traders, would have been barred from attending but they were able to support and patronise the societies, coffee houses and lectures, which grew in strength from the 1760s. As Brewer has argued, the flourishing of theatre, races, music festivals and assemblies required the influence of the rural nobility so the fact that all of these struggled to continue at the end of the century highlights this abandonment of the urban centre by the rural nobility.

Although there were opportunities for the intermixing of sexes in Derby, it was defined within social limitations. At the core of the assemblies was the need for the sexes to interact and likewise, theatrical performances and lectures were usually advertised as being for both male and female audiences. The middling sorts cultures of inns, clubs, and societies though were much more limiting as they were often actively excluded from entering or participating in these. Socially, it was only urban sporting events that offered a socially wide-ranging participation with horse racing being the most prominent example but even then, working class pastimes such as football and bull-baiting were increasingly attacked by the upper classes who sought the banning of them.

The inns and the newspapers of Derby also showed how urban culture could reflect political divides with the George and King's Head inns having separate political clientele whilst the *Derby Mercury* failed to be politically neutral leading to the creation of an opposing Tory newspaper, *Harrison's Derby Journal*. The more gentrified culture of the town though was more politically diverse, shown by the subscriptions lists for the assemblies and races and the list of patrons for the 1788 music festival. But in the end, it was the middling sorts cultures that survived whilst the gentry cultures failed, showing that Derby's urban culture fed off the manufacturing and professional make-up of the urban elite who provided the core of its patrons. The scientific and associational cultures of the middling sorts were both a cause and effect of Derby's enlightenment atmosphere which also led to several attempts to improve the physical environment of the town, to which we turn now.

Chapter 7: Urban Improvement in Derby

To proponents of the concept of the urban renaissance, such as Borsay and Brewer, the growth experienced by towns in the long eighteenth century pre-dated the classic 'Industrial Revolution' period of c.1760-1830. It was a distinctive urban experience. Jones and Falkus have defined urban growth very broadly as the 'qualitative refinements of the habitat' which includes many aspects of what the Georgian's regarded as 'improvement', although historians need to be careful not to simply list the improvements experienced by a town which, as Innes and Rogers have argued, 'too easily suggests cumulative progress.'[1] This chapter will examine the growth and development of Derby during the eighteenth century and consider how closely this follows the pattern of improvement evident in other Georgian urban centres. It will argue that the optimistic urban renaissance model, which regards urban improvement as a unifying endeavour around which members of the urban elite with different religious and political affiliations could unite, is not fully evident in Georgian Derby. In fact, the benefits of improvement ventures were usually confined to the middling sorts rather than the rural nobility or labouring population. It will also show how Derby's urban renaissance largely occurred during the second half of the eighteenth century and therefore later than in other Georgian towns, especially in southern England. Furthermore, there were limitations to the scale and impact of improvements, with areas of Derby inhabited by the poorer sort, for instance, not benefitting.

The concept of improvement entered the English vocabulary during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, coming to mean 'gradual, piecemeal, and cumulative betterment' where previously it had simply meant to make land profitable.[2] Perhaps the most important aspect of the etymology of this new improvement was that the progress of improvement could be measured and investigated, with the 'creation

[1] Eric L. Jones, and Malcolm E. Falkus, 'Urban Improvement and the English Economy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (New York: 1995), p. 153; Joanna Innes, and Nicholas Rogers, 'Politics and Government 1700-1840' in Peter Clark, (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Vol 2 1540-1840* (Cambridge: 2000), p. 542.
[2] Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: 2015), pp. vii and 1.

and collection of new kinds of knowledge and information' for that very purpose.[3] The link between knowledge and the improvement of physical space is where it becomes intertwined with the enlightenment as philosophers of the period 'celebrated the application of "order, balance, harmony, symmetry, and regularity"'.[4] Even for contemporaries however, the ability to find a uniform definition for these principles was difficult. David Hume, writing in the mid-eighteenth century saw that judging the beauty of an object was easy for the eye but for 'general rules for ranging objects under different classes, according to those qualities, we should find ourselves greatly at a loss.'[5]

For modern historians, the term 'improvement' has been just as difficult to define as it suggests an agreement on progress. Hoyle has defined improvement as the 'desirable sweeping away of the irrational and inefficient practice of the past.'[6] This idea of improvement as an increase in efficiency is corroborated by Jones and Falkus who cite an 'increase in traffic', slight population growth but with a 'greater volume of business done', and the nature of that business, as the markers of improvement, specifically as a result of improved streets and surplus wealth.[7] On the other hand, Reed has argued that the increase in traffic was the driving force, rather than the result of improvement and impelled forward 'by purely practical reasons, better paved streets were good for business, or else by conscious civic pride, itself sometimes driven by personal rivalries.'[8] It was a term that was acceptable to all across the political spectrum for conservatives saw improvement 'without innovation' and reformers, improvement 'as progress'. It therefore 'avoided the idea of innovation whilst suggesting the desirability of change.'[9] Either way, improvement and urban growth were intrinsically linked.

Borsay has argued that improvements were central to the urban renaissance as the town's physical form became an 'overt sign of its prosperity and status, dominating the first impressions of any visitor; but it also expressed the social and cultural aspirations

[3] Slack, *The Invention of Improvement*, pp. vii-1 and 4.
[4] Paul A. Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers: Science and Culture in British Urban Society 1700-1850* (Manchester: 2009), p. 114.
[5] Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England* (New Haven: 2007), p. 1.
[6] Richard W. Hoyle, 'Introduction: Custom, Improvement and Anti-improvement', in Richard W Hoyle. (ed.), *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham: 2011). P. 1.
[7] Jones and Falkus, 'Urban Improvement', pp. 146 and 153.
[8] Michael Reed, 'The Transformation of Urban Space 1700-1840', in Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History*, pp. 634-5.
[9] Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689-1798* (Oxford: 1994), p. 211.

of those who resided there'.[10] Contemporary local historians, whose writings were intended to help promote urban culture, made sure to extol the virtues of the modernised aspects of the borough. Glover, slightly after our period in the 1830s, drew attention to Derby having become 'distinguished among the provincial capitals' with improvements that blended 'perfection, elegance and utility.'[11] James Pilkington, writing in the 1780s, noted 'several great improvements' in the borough particularly the several new bridges.[12] Recent accounts of improvement in Derby during the long eighteenth century have tended to summarise the transformation of the built environment without going into details on the problems, processes and conflicts behind them giving the impression that urban improvement was a unifying concept and beneficial to the town as a whole.

Analyses of eighteenth-century improvements in other towns reveal some of the tensions that underlay transformations of urban environments and the varied impact these had on different social classes. Urban improvements in Dundee, for example, were largely left to the people and extra-governmental bodies such as the nine incorporated trades. This left improvement in the town 'both inadequate and unsuccessful'. [13] In Leeds, the amount of land open for development was too constrained and led to the building of the town's infamous back-to-back houses.[14] Edinburgh, on the other hand, experienced much urban improvement in this period, as would be expected from a capital city, but its uneven distribution led to a city divided along Princes Street between the affluent New Town and the poor Old Town.[15] The structure of urban government, the available land for development, and the priorities of those with the energy to push for improvement, could all, therefore, affect the final outcome.

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[10] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford: 1991), p. 41.
[11] Stephen Glover, *Glover's Derby*, facsimile edition of 1849 publication (Derby: 1992), p. 8.
[12] James Pilkington, *A View of the Present State of Derbyshire with an Account of its Most Remarkable Antiquities*, Vol 2 (Derby: 1789), p. 181.
[13] Louise Miskell, 'From Conflict to Co-operation: Urban Improvement and the Case of Dundee, 1790-1850', in *Urban History* (29:3, 2002), pp. 351-356.
[14] Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham and Sheffield are also referenced as turning to such housing to maximise urban space in this period. Joanna Harrison, 'The Origin, Development and Decline of Back-to-Back Houses in Leeds, 1787-1937', in *Industrial Archaeology* Review (39:2, 2017), p. 101; Maurice Beresford, 'The Back-to-Back House in Leeds 1787-1937', in Stanley Chapman (ed.), *The History of Working-Class Housing* (Newton Abbot: 1971).
[15] Pamela Sharpe and Joanne McEwan, 'Introduction', in Pamela Sharpe and Joanna McEwan (eds.), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c.1600-1850* (Basingstoke: 2011), p. 9; Michael Aston and James Bond, *The Landscape of Towns* (London: 1976), pp. 158-9.

Although, as we have seen, there are significant gaps in the archival records for eighteenth-century Derby, especially through the loss of most corporation documents, there are enough surviving sources to reconstruct and analyse what occurred. These include evidence from the built environment such as surviving townhouses, churches and civic buildings. Likewise, printed sources such as the *Derby Mercury,* carried the first mentions of improvement projects, notices from the corporation over nuisances and needed repairs, the text of improvement acts, and lists of subscribers for particular improvement ventures. These show the social make-up of improvement proponents, and the minutes of bodies such as the improvement commission show who was most active during improvement projects and what power they had. This chapter combines analysis of accounts of improvements in town histories with the minutes and subscription lists of Derby's improvement projects with how they were reported in the local paper. It then compares the Derby experience with those of other towns demonstrating how urban elite figures appear constantly in all the improvement projects, as proponents, subscribers, or as prominent figures during meetings.

Initially we will examine Derby's approaches to improvement and how urban elites, most prominently the justices and senior corporation members identified in chapters two and three, improved the urban space to their design. The second section of the chapter argues that the process surrounding the enclosure of Nuns Green in two acts of Parliament in 1768 and 1792 demonstrates the extent of social divides in Derby's urban society concerning improvement which was manifest in the factions for and against enclosure. Likewise, the dispute drew attention to the contentious subject of the mode of assessment that would be required to raise funds and what the land would be used for once it had been enclosed. The controversy around the 1792 bill severely tested the idea that improvement was a unifying force and demonstrates that there were limits to how much those amongst the middling sorts and urban gentry could influence urban life without facing opposition.

Derby did not receive a general improvement act until 1792 with the Paving and Lighting Act, which will be the focus of the latter part of this chapter. That section will examine the aftermath of the enclosure of Nuns Green and the buildings that replaced that area of common land, which was the most extensive example of urban improvement in Georgian Derby as new streets, bridges, and an altered course for the

Markeaton Brook was undertaken to 'civilise' the common. The money raised from the selling of lots of common land was used towards paving and lighting the rest of the town causing the most extensive urban change in Derby's history at that time through the beautification of the town's principal streets, yet it still ignored poorer areas of the town. The minute book of the improvement commission established to oversee the project has survived and records the regular monthly meetings, the decisions made, and attendance lists, covering 1792 to 1825 when a new act of Parliament replaced it. The evidence contained in the minute book provides a comprehensive case study of the running of such improvement commissions as well as highlighting how a small number of urban elites could affect the town's physical growth.

Improvement schemes often generated controversy, not necessarily due to the improvement itself but how the 'implementation might affect various interests.'[16] This is most notable where improvements were directly impacted by politics, as seen, for example, by the 'generous contributions made by patrons and Members of Parliament to public buildings and works, in order to enhance their political reputation.'[17] The resulting 'prestige that accrued from public architecture' across towns during the urban renaissance, was not limited to the benefactors though as 'investment in the civic image of the town…was designed to raise its collective status.'[18] Contemporary celebrations of improvements tended to suggest that they were uniformly welcomed whilst hiding areas of dissent. A pamphlet produced in Derby seeking to improve the town's defence against flooding for example, referred to the 'spirit of improvement' in the town and noted that the 'inhabitants have since that period, exerted themselves in a manner which equally evinces their good sense, and the liberality of their minds', a view which demands challenge.[19]

This chapter will examine the approach the members of the Derby's urban elite took to improvements and how different this approach was in the different social groups already identified in this thesis. Each of the projects that will be analysed usually began with an advertisement in the *Mercury* and an invitation to review plans (the closest to a

[16] Innes and Rogers, 'Politics and Government', pp. 541-2.
[17] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 223.
[18] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 253.
[19] *To the inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood of Derby, particularly those who are liable to be injured by Floods* (DLSL Box 24, No 44).

public consultation it got), and a push for subscribers both from the people of the town and gentry from further afield. By examining this and how improvement projects were managed, this chapter will demonstrate that improvement was not as much of a unifying force as members of the local urban elite claimed. In fact, supporters of particular improvement measures and those responsible for implementing them, often faced considerable opposition which clearly demonstrates that the concept of improvement was a much more divisive force in Georgian urban politics than has often been recognised, particularly in Derby.

Derby's Approach to Improvement

In 1843, looking back over the previous decades, Glover wrote that Derby was 'becoming distinguished among the provincial capitals of the kingdom for improvements' which to him blended the 'two characteristics of perfection, elegance and utility'.[20] Glover's account shows two important factors of long eighteenth-century urban improvement, that it should be functional as well as stylish, and that local historians would refer to them to prove the worth of a town. The role that improvements played in beautifying the town was an important part of their appeal to local commercial, landowning, and professional elites, in addition to the practical benefits they would bring. As we have noted, the concept of improvement was ideologically loaded providing elites with opportunities to regulate and manage public places thereby reinforcing social divisions. This section will analyse the improvements made in Derby during the long eighteenth century and how the urban elites attempted to control the streets through the removal of nuisances and implementing repairs. It will show that as the century progressed, urban officials made greater attempts to improve and beautify the town eventually leading to the all-encompassing act of Parliament in 1792. It will also show that those improvements were limited in scope and focussed more on the affluent areas which may have led to them being targeted as symbols of elite control.

Early in the eighteenth century, Derby was described as a 'fine, beautiful, and pleasant town' by Daniel Defoe who claimed that it had 'more families of gentlemen' in it than

[20] Glover, *Glover's Derby*, p. 8.

was usual in 'towns so remote'.[21] It was constructed mostly of brick according to Celia Fiennes who often used the presence of brickwork as a criterion for a town's attractiveness.[22] Changes to the urban landscape became more pronounced in the second half of the eighteenth century as Derby physically expanded becoming the 'large, populous and well built' town visited by Charles Burlington in 1782 and 'handsome, and well inhabited' according to John Aikin.[23] Sylas Neville though, writing in 1781, was less complimentary, drawing his readers' attention to Derby being a 'strange straggling place' with narrow, unpaved streets and indifferent buildings'.[24] These kinds of pronouncements by travellers and other contemporary sources such as trade directories were, however, standard fare and employed similar language. The Municipal Corporation report of 1833 used similar language describing the town as a 'most flourishing place' and praised the corporation's approach to improvements.[25]

Removing dangerous or unpleasant nuisances was a constant concern of Derby's urban elite and was a way of controlling the urban space as well as being part of practical governance. It was not until the 1792 Paving and Lighting act that improvement schemes were put under a single commission that was able to target all dangers and nuisances at once and the decades preceding it show several attempts by Derby's urban elite to improve the streets and the attitudes of the townspeople towards the physical space. The *Derby Mercury* in November 1773 included a notice from the corporation which read:

> 'It is with Pleasure we inform the Publick, that the Corporation have agreed to give Mr Kirk Boot [c.1719-1780] a Sum of Money for Part of the Ground on which his House now stands at the Market-Head: the Intention being to widen the narrow and dangerous Passage, which will render it much more commodious and safe, while it adds Ornament to the Town.'[26]

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[21] Philip N. Furbank, William R. Owens, and Andrew J. Coulson (eds.) *Daniel Defoe: A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (originally published 1727) (New Haven: 1991) p. 238.
[22] Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle In the Time of William and Mary* (originally written 1685-c.1712) (London: 1888) p. 139
[23] Charles Burlington, *The Modern Universal British Trader* (London: 1782), p104; John Aikin, *England Delineated* (London: 1788), p. 119.
[24] Sylas Neville quoted in Paul Sturges, *Cultural Life in Derby in the late Eighteenth-Century (circa 1770-1800),* unpublished Masters thesis (Loughborough University: 1968), p. 1.
[25] Alexander E. Cockburn and Edward Rushton, *Report of the commissioners on Municipal Corporations and Wales, Report on the Borough of Derby (Derbyshire)*, c.1833 (DLSL BA352 (MUN)), pp. 1856-7.
[26] *Derby Mercury,* 5th November 1773.

This advert represents the unification of two principles that governed urban improvement, that of removing dangers whilst also increasing the attractiveness of town streets and spaces.

Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782), who had a particular interest in urban improvement whilst mayor, re-affirmed a law in 1760 which sought to prevent carriages from causing an obstruction in public by-ways unless loading and unloading.[27] These measures were repeated in 1767, 1768, 1769, 1774 and 1786. The fact that an act of Parliament was in place to prosecute offenders for such nuisances, and the constant attention that such obstructions got from the corporation, shows that they were difficult to regulate but that there was a determination to prevent and/or punish abuses. Measures were also taken by the corporation to prevent other kinds of obstructions in streets caused by piles of soil and dirt left by the roadside. Scavengers were hired in 1782 for the sole purpose of carrying away dirt, ashes, and rubbish on Wednesday and Saturday each week that had been left by inhabitants who were required to sweep the pavement in front of their property. Anyone laying this waste on the streets other than those mentioned would be indicted.[28] In October of the same year it was made clear why scavengers and rules concerning the removal of waste were necessary when the Manchester coach was tipped over by rubbish lying in St Peter's parish.[29] In 1787, John White and James Hough were brought before the mayor and forced to give a public apology for dumping soil in Gaol Bridge under the windows of Joseph Strutt [1765-1844].[30] The danger caused by leaving carts and dirt in the streets was emphasised again in the *Mercury* in 1789 where, the editor advised that noone should travel at night or risk running into such an obstruction.[31]

On her death in 1735, Margaret Chambers had left a bequest in her will to pay for 80 lamps to be distributed throughout the town. One critic of the lamps claimed that the new oil used served only to make the 'darkness' more 'visible'.[32] By the second half of the eighteenth century, attempts were made to provide an all-encompassing act of Parliament to reduce all nuisances, which will be analysed below, but in 1774 it was

[27] *Derby Mercury,* 17th October 1760.
[28] *Derby Mercury,* 10th January 1782.
[29] *Derby Mercury,* 3rd October 1782.
[30] *Derby Mercury,* 6th September 1787.
[31] *Derby Mercury,* 3rd December 1789.
[32] Rev. William Hope, 'Jottings of Old Derby', in *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* (Vol 4, 1882), p. 151.

decided that a meeting of the town inhabitants could solve the lighting issues on its own and thus avoid the expense of pursuing an act.[33] This failed though and another meeting was called by the mayor, William Edwards (c.1726-1800), in 1785 with a much more limited scope, seeking only to provide the lighting of lamps during the upcoming winter seasons.[34] A year later the new mayor, Henry Flint (d. 1792), informed the town that the fund created for lamps provided for 80 in total, which were to be lit during winter and placed in 'the most useful and necessary Parts' of Derby, 'without any Respect to private Convenience.'[35] These lamps therefore did not generally light the poorer districts.

In all the attempts to prepare an improvement bill for the town, as elsewhere, paving and lighting were seen as complementary initiatives. Although responsibility for road repair in Derby was with the parishes, it often fell on the inhabitants themselves. In Leicester, the inhabitants were responsible for repairing the pavement in front of their houses, sometimes all the way to the middle of the street.[36] In Derby, it appears the responsibility only extended to the pavement in front of their dwellings. However, this meant that standard materials were not always used which caused uneven surfaces and properties with poor or no inhabitants were left in a state of disrepair. In 1787 Henry Flint demanded that the inhabitants of several principal streets should repair their respective pavements or be indicted at the next quarter sessions. These measures were also aimed at the several parishes and trusts who were responsible for repairing some of the streets.[37] A follow up four weeks later highlights that the extent of these responsibilities remained confused as the Nuns Green trust denied that they were in charge of repairs to a road by St Alkmund's workhouse so the responsibility was handed to the surveyors of that parish.[38]

A legal case between three Derby parishes concerning road repair dragged on from 1734 to 1739 and went all the way to the King's Bench and is indicative of the complexities of the road improvement process. In 1734, the surveyors of the highways for St Alkmund's parish were found to have been pressing the parishioners of St Michael's and All Saints' for assessment payments to repair the roads that passed

[33] *Derby Mercury,* 2nd December 1774.
[34] *Derby Mercury,* 20th October 1785.
[35] *Derby Mercury,* 19th October 1786.
[36] Alfred Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester* (Leicester: 1954), p. 8.
[37] *Derby Mercury,* 1st March 1787.
[38] *Derby Mercury,* 29th March 1787.

through all three parishes.[39] St Alkmund's may have used this high-handed approach due to a 1712 incident where All Saints' parish had refused to pay their share of a previous agreement (40s according to St Alkmund's).[40] In their parish minutes, St Alkmund's vestry cited joint road repairs as being an 'Ancient Custom', a common issue in urban governments with 'prescriptive' rights where there was no recorded evidence but were instead based on usage.[41] Understandably, perhaps, All Saints' dug their feet in and both sides resorted to bringing in legal counsel.[42] Although the minute books are silent on the conclusion, the final entries concerning the issues show All Saints' demanding a writ of apology from St Alkmund's, and both parishes were faced with a substantial legal bill which no doubt was higher than the original cost of road repair, for which both had to apply for assessments and loans to clear.[43] All Saints' had a much more harmonious relationship with St Michael's parish with whom they joined forces to repair Alderman Hill and Walker Lane amongst others.[44] These legal battles therefore shows how like other administrative entities in this period, the responsibilities of the parishes were not always clear but that parishes were willing to fight to maintain their independence regardless of any arguments for 'the greater good'.

The above legal case also shows that road repair, or the avoidance of road repair, was an expensive endeavour for both the vestry and the parishioners. Often the highway assessment rate was the lowest of the three assessment rates by the parish, with the poor law and churchwarden's rates being higher. So difficult could it be to gather that in 1764 St Alkmund's had to resort to a decision by the sessions to forcibly collect it.[45] In 1782, their minutes also show that the repair of 100 yards of Bridgegate cost just short of £30, the entire amount they had raised for highway repair in 1777-81, giving some idea of the total cost faced by parishes for road repairs.[46] When rising costs and a low assessment rate return caused a deficit in payments, the parish had to turn to their

[39] *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1722-66*, 13th May 1734 (DRO M156 Vol 4).
[40] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 4th August 1712 and 7th November 1712 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[41] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 13th May 1734 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[42] *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1722-66*, 2nd March 1737 (DRO M156 Vol 4); *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 4th September 1738 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[43] A final figure of £78.16s.11d for this specific case is given in the *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1722-66*, 22nd January 1741 (DRO M156 Vol 4), and three payments of £77, £57, and £14.10s to John Gisborne for law costs though not specifying which cases they were accrued are shown it the *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 4th September 1738 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[44] *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1722-66*, 3rd May 1731 and 2nd March 1737 (DRO M156 Vol 4).
[45] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 26th December 1764 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[46] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 29th April 1782 and 22nd October 1782 (DRO M167 Vol 2).

wealthier parishioners to back the repairs. John Gisborne (c.1675-1762), who funded the St Alkmund's legal case discussed above, also gave loans to the parish for road repairs. In 1738 he gave £20 for the highways in March then a few months later gave £15 and then a further £5. The same year he gave money to defray their legal costs which also required the sale of two houses and a ley of land owned by the parish to cover the cost.[47] In 1759, Gisborne loaned the parish the entire amount of costs for the repair of the road from St Mary's Bridge to Chester Green.[48] All Saints', on the other hand, perhaps benefitted from being the parish containing the corporation as several of the roads in the parish were under the latter's jurisdiction. The only mention of their need for financial assistance occurred when the lawyer and later MP, Daniel Parker Coke (1745-1825), granted 5 guineas for the repair of the 'High Road' at the top of Silk Mill Lane behind the church, though this is also where Coke's house sat so he may have felt some responsibility for it.[49]

Improvement of the urban space was promoted by Derby's corporation throughout the eighteenth century which was not the case in some other corporate towns. The corporations of Liverpool and Glasgow, for example, held an active interest in improvement whereas Colchester's took none.[50] The corporations of Bristol and Newcastle were both averse to improvement which was been blamed on the complacency of local elites and oligarchy.[51] Derby's corporation though placed frequent advertisements in the *Derby Mercury*, particularly under the mayoralty of Samuel Crompton and Henry Flint, reminding the people of the town not to leave obstacles in public by-ways and to sweep and pave the streets infront of their properties. The number of individuals who subscribed to improvement ventures in the final decades of the eighteenth century, however, demonstrates that the urban elite were becoming more determined to transform the townscape and manage the main streets as the population expanded.

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[47] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 13th March 1738, 17th July 1738, 23rd August 1738, and 4th September 1738 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[48] *St Alkmund's Vestry Minutes 1700-83*, 21st August 1759 (DRO M167 Vol 2).
[49] *All Saints Order/Minute Book 1766-1847*, 6th April 1786 (DRO M156 Vol 5).
[50] Joyce Ellis, *The Georgian Town 1680-1840* (Basingstoke: 2001), p. 98.
[51] Joyce Ellis, 'Regional and Country Centres 1700-1840', in Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, p. 680.

The Enclosure of Nuns Green

This chapter has so far shown that improvement was more likely to divide urban society than unite it and nowhere is this more visible than in relation to urban enclosure. Urban common lands were different to rural common lands in that they were often under the ownership of a corporation acting on behalf of the burgesses. This ambiguity of ownership meant that improvement measures concerning common land often became powder kegs of dissent once the land became earmarked for enclosure because a small minority of the town's ruling elite were making decisions without, it was claimed, acknowledging the rights of the wider body of freemen. Nuns Green in Derby was enclosed in two parts in 1768 and 1792 but only the latter led to a significant public outcry. The pamphlet war that erupted between 1789 and 1792 gives great insight into the popular politics of the town and demonstrates that opposition to enclosure was mostly focussed on ways rather than means and destroys any notion that 'improvement' was a unifying force.[52]

The politics surrounding enclosure of urban common land has received much less attention than that generated by enclosure of rural land during the long eighteenth century, yet, in both cases, the land involved usually had important agricultural and other functions. A few studies have sought to bridge the gap between urban and rural enclosures. French, for example, has produced case studies for Sudbury in Sussex and Clitheroe in Lancashire which show that the ownership of the land was less clear in urban areas and that a land grab by gentry was a common occurrence during enclosure because ownership of urban land often translated to political influence through the securing of votes.[53] Neeson has argued that in relation to rural enclosures, the controversies they generated cannot simply been seen as a struggle between the lower classes protecting their rights and the upper classes ignoring them. Instead, Neeson contends that whatever rights the lower classes had were mostly ancient and unwritten whilst those that were recorded were purposefully ambiguous. Neeson also argues that the ruling classes could be found on both sides of enclosure debates as they often based

[52] Innes and Rogers, 'Politics and Government', pp. 541-2.
[53] Henry French, 'Urban Common Rights, Enclosure and the Market: Clitheroe Town Moors 1764-1802' in *Agricultural History Review* (51:1, 2003); Henry French, 'Urban Agriculture, Commons and Commoners in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: The Case of Sudbury, Suffolk' in *Agricultural History Review* (48:2, 2000).

their opinions on economic or political factors rather than on class.[54] Studies of urban history, although their focus has not primarily been upon urban enclosure, are used here as an example of the strength, or weakness, of common rights. Maitland explained how borough corporations governed common land as landowners rather than protectors of burgess rights with his discussion centring on the ambiguity of land termed 'public' and 'common'.[55] Where rural enclosure has been seen as an economic issue, urban enclosure depended on local social and political factors.[56]

Usage of 'common land' in or adjoining urban areas, was often part of the rights of burgesses. Attempts to enclose common land to fund urban improvement projects or increase the size of the town were the source of conflict in Derby, Nottingham, and other Georgian towns. Until the mid-eighteenth century, processes of enclosure were determined by landowners. However, once parliamentary enclosures became more common, they required support from a wider segment of society.[57] Common lands were generally used for grazing beasts, fuel and food, of which women were the primary beneficiaries, with a variety of other uses depending upon the agricultural or industrial output of the area.[58] The loss of these uses or threats to them could cause poverty not only for those reliant upon them, but to the wider economy of the area demonstrating its importance to local communities.[59]

Derby differed from many boroughs in that its old monastic lands were granted to the corporation by Queen Mary in a bid to gain favour; elsewhere land was put up for sale to private landlords. Opponents of enclosure in Derby though, referring to a popular ballad distributed during the enclosure debate in 1791, claimed that the lands had been granted by John of Gaunt, a major landowner in the town as the Earl of Derby in the fourteenth century, for the benefit of the poor. This ballad was identical to one used by opposition to the enclosure of Hatherliegh Moor in Devon suggesting it was not based in truth.[60] If it had been a charitable bequest to the people, then there were usually

[54] Jeanette M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure, and Social Change in England 1700-1820* (Cambridge: 1995).
[55] Frederic W. Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge: 1964), pp. 10, 13-15, and 32.
[56] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers,* p. 114.
[57] Gregory Clark and Anthony Clark, 'Common rights to Land in England 1475-1839', in *Journal of Economic History* (61:4, December 2001), p. 1011.
[58] Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850* (New York: 1998), pp. 154-55.
[59] John Rule, *Albion's People: English Society 1714-1815* (New York: 1994) pp. 132-33.
[60] Dudley L. Stamp and William G. Hoskins, *The Common Lands of England and Wales* (London: 1963) p. 16; *The Sorrowful Lamentation. Last Dying Speech and Confession of Nuns Green* (DLSL No 8, Box 27).

stipulations by the benefactor concerning how it was to be used. Normally 'common rights did not originate in royal or feudal grants but in earlier – perhaps much earlier – agricultural practices'.[61] A lack of evidence regarding common rights might be explained by the hesitation by manorial lords and corporations to record them to make it easier to legally remove them when required, with acts often requiring the commonality to prove the existence of such rights.[62]

According to Woolley, writing in the early-eighteenth century, Nuns Green was 'common land, on which the burgesses had grazing rights'. Upon the green there was also the 'town pinfold, wherein stray cattle were locked', kennels belonging to the town harriers, baker's ovens and the furze which heated them, and piles of timber stored by carpenters.[63] Free burgesses paid 'not toll of lead or any other goods…laid up there at Nungreen or any other place, which other persons in the town are liable to.'[64] John Speed's 1610 map of Derby (figure 3) shows Nuns Green as a wide-open space with a man tending to a bull, a pinfold and the market cross. During the eighteenth century, the Green also contained a tilery, brickworks, bowling green and a kennel.[65] These descriptions of common land use show how integral it was to the urban economy and the livelihoods of those who depended on its use. Agriculture served as a necessary second source of income to urban workers, most likely the widows of freemen who could use the land to pasture their cows. Although this was a common right, the use of it to graze animals required some financial resources to purchase these animals in the first place suggesting that not all freemen used it for this purpose.[66] Those without direct use of the land could still profit through the rent paid by non-freeman animal owners using the land for grazing. There was a tendency in parishes subject to enclosure in this period that poor rates increased as parishioners lost whatever subsistence they gained from common land.[67] From looking at the records for the parish

[61] Mark Bowden, Graham Brown, and Nicky Smith, *An Archaeology of Town Commons in England* (Swindon: 2009), p. 18.
[62] Neeson, *Commoners,* p. 79.
[63] William A. Richardson, *Citizen's Derby* (London: 1949), p. 138;
[64] Catherine Glover, and Philip Riden, (eds.), *William Woolley's History of Derbyshire* (Chesterfield: 1981) p. 42.
[65] Maxwell Craven, *An Illustrated History of Derby* (Derby: 2007), p. 113.
[66] Henry French, 'The Common Fields of Urban England: Communal Agriculture and the "Politics of Entitlement", 1500-1700', in Hoyle, *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape*, p. 167.
[67] Carl J. Griffin, *The Politics of Hunger: Protest, Poverty and Policy in England c.1750-1840* (Manchester: 2020), p. 7.

of St Werburgh's, in which Nuns Green was situated, there was a doubling of churchwarden income in 1802 from £66 to £134 as the assessment rate was double from 6d to 12d. The enclosure of Nun's Green was completed in 1792 (although lots remained on sale until atleast 1812) but whether this jump in the assessment rate was down to enclosure is difficult to ascertain as the minutes from the corresponding years have not survived.[68] It is therefore difficult to determine exactly what Nuns Green was used for and how important the economic loss was for the people of Derby. Culturally and politically though, it created much opposition.

The preamble to the Nuns Green enclosure act of 1768 stated that Derby had 'by the Increase of Trade become very prosperous' and there was a need for more 'Dwelling Houses'.[69] The act's purpose was to enclose a small portion of the green to be sold in lots with the profits used to beautify the rest of the green. It was also promoted based on problems that existed with the green where buildings had been erected and gravel dug 'to the no small detriment and loss of those with the right of common' and the 'Prejudice of the health of the said Borough, by reason of the stagnated water and other nuisances'.[70] The buildings on the green had not been built with the greater good in mind and so a stipulation was put in place detailing that all buildings on the green would be removed with only those built over 20 years before being compensated for. All building materials removed for this purpose would then be sold to benefit the act. The gravel pits that had been left to collect stagnated water would be filled in and a proviso introduced that although gravel would still be allowed to be collected from the green, the pits would have to be filled in within ten days. The wording was very much phrased to acknowledge that the public good was the primary concern and specifically notes that one of the aims was to make it safer and more productive for those exercising common right.[71]

Acts of Parliament required the patronage of local MPs or Lords who had a 'direct impact of politics on the urban landscape' through their 'generous contributions…to public buildings and works, in order to enhance their political reputation.'[72] The first

[68] *St Werburgh's Churchwarden Accounts 1787-1865* (DRO M173, Vol 6)
[69] *An Act for Selling Part of a Green called Nun's Green, 1768* (DLSL Acc.6330), p .1.
[70] *An Act for Selling Part of a Green called Nun's Green, 1768* (DLSL Acc.6330), p .2.
[71] *An Act for Selling Part of a Green called Nun's Green, 1768* (DLSL Acc.6330), p. 1-2.
[72] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 223.

Derby Nuns Green enclosure act was introduced to the commons by the then borough MPs, Lord Frederick Cavendish (1729-1803) and William Fitzherbert (1712-1772) who also became trustees once it had passed.[73] It is likely that the inclusion of the rural nobility in these lists were largely symbolic, adding weight to the proposal in parliament, and that it is unlikely they would have benefitted directly from its passing. Only the Mundy family, who owned a track leading from the green to their property at Markeaton, were directly affected which explains the inclusion of Francis Noel Clarke Mundy (1739-1815) as a trustee.[74]

The trustees had much more power than other governing bodies (though limited to this specific task), being able to force the demolition of buildings and securing materials whilst also being able to determine the prices and charging those who did not comply with their wishes. Tenants and landowners were granted 21 days to comply with the requests of the trustees with failure to do so resulting in a visit by a jury of 'Twelve indifferent men of Derby' who would have the final say. If the trustees needed to procure building materials, they could dictate whatever price they felt necessary and then could defend that price in court against the defendant who would then be liable for costs should the jury decide in the favour of the trustees. If a warrant was required to seize a building, the jury would consist of 24 men, 12 chosen by the trustees and 12 by the High Sheriff, with expenses again falling on the losing side. The trustees therefore had extensive powers to enact change as trustees such as Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782) and William Evans (d. 1773) also served as justices of the peace through their position within the corporation and could therefore influence the decisions made in court.[75]

[73] *Journal of the House of Commons* (Vol 31, 1803), p. 556.
[74] The original act contains a list of trustees. Changes to the trustees during the life of the act are taken from notices in the *Derby Mercury* which advertised meetings of the trustees and specified when trustees were being replaced due to their death; *Derby Mercury,* 12th February 1768, 26th May 1769, 6th July, 1770, 14th December 1770, 5th February 1773, 7th May 1773, 12th November 1773, 17th March 1775, 4th April 1782, 18th August 1785, 1st September 1785, 29th December 1785, 12th October 1786, 10th December 1789.
[75] *An Act for Selling Part of a Green called Nun's Green, 1768* (DLSL Acc.6330).

Name	Situation in 1768 (unless otherwise stated)
Lord Frederick Cavendish (1729-1803)	MP for Derby, brother of 4th Duke of Devonshire
Nathanial Curzon (1726-1804)	1st Baron Scarsdale of Kedleston Hall
Thomas Allsop (c. 1706-1783)	Gent.
Thomas Bainbridge	High Sheriff in 1766
Philip Barnes (d. 1769)	JP
John Bingham (c. 1693-1773)	Alderman, Mercer
John Bingham (d. 1819)	
Joseph Bingham (c. 1698-1780)	Alderman, JP
John Bloodworth (d. 1771)	Hosier
Theophilius Browne (c. 1715-1786)	Apothecary and Druggist, Brethren
John Bingham Jr	Alderman
Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782)	Alderman, Banker, High Sheriff in 1768,
Thomas Coke (1700-1776)	Barrister, Father of Daniel Parker Coke
William Evans (c. 1773)	Alderman, Cornfactor
Thomas Eaton (c. 1713-1793)	Alderman, Stockiner
Thomas Evans (1723-1814)	Cotton Manufacturer.
William Fitzherbert (1712-1814)	MP for Derby
Gilbert Fox (c. 1711-1782)	Soap Boiler, Distributor of Stamps
William Fowler (c. 1711-1794)	Attorney
Samuel Fox (d. 1770)	Bookseller
Francis Fox (c. 1724-1789)	Gent.
John Gisborne (c. 1717-1779)	Lawyer, Later MP for Derby
Samuel Heathcote (1724-1784)	Attorney
William Hope (c. 1702-1776)	MD
John Heath (1709-1786)	Alderman, Banker
John Harrison	Surgeon, Master Extraordinary in the High Court of Chancery
Charles Horsley (d. 1785)	Tanner
Thomas Lord (da. 1769)	
Thomas Lowe (c. 1717-1791)	Mercer
William Merrill Lockett (1732-1777)	Attorney, Town Clerk,
Francis N C Mundy (1739-1815)	Of Markeaton Hall
George Mellor (c. 1721-1779)	
Thomas Macklin	
Ralph Melland (d. 1778)	Grazier
Thomas Manlove (1729-1802)	Reverand, Derby School Master
Richard Noton (c. 1714-1776)	Maltster
James Shuttleworth	
Joshua Smith (c. 1686-1773)	Alderman, Apothecary
Thomas Stamford (1712-1785)	Alderman, Hosier
Anthony Stephenson	Druggist and Oilman
John Seale (d. 1774)	Reverand
Henry Tatum	Doctor
Joseph Tatlow (1770)	Draper

James Tomlinson	Druggist, Chemist, and Oilman
Snowden White (d. 1775)	Doctor
Samuel Wilde (d. 1778)	Alderman, Mercer
Rich Wright (1730-1814)	Surgeon
John Webster	Banker
Rich Whitby (c. 1720-1783)	Attorney
Rich Ward (1773)	Grocer
Josh Winter (c. 1699-1774)	Reverand, Chaplain to Corporation
Henry Wilmot	Reverand
Henry Offley Wright (1749-1773)	Reverand

Table 4: List of trustees created by the Nuns Green Act, 1768.

The commissioners represented a cross section of urban society, based on wealth but diverse in politics and occupations based on those trades and politics that could be matched with the trustees. Of the initial 53 trustees, 21 can be cross-checked against the 1775 poll book showing 10 voted Tory and 11 voting Whig indicating a greater level of political diversity than the corporation. The corporation did have representation in the trustees with six aldermen being in the original trustee list, three of whom would serve as mayor in this period, as well as the town clerk and recorder, with no doubt many brethren serving as well. The trustee list stipulates that the mayor and recorder of the corporation were *ex officio* included as trustees thus highlighting the link between corporation and the improvement commission. The most represented urban group on this first trustee list (table 4) is the professionals, with lawyers, bankers, clergy, and doctors making up at least 17 of the 53 trustees with non-professional trades such as mercers, grocers, and maltsters making up 13 of those identified. Medical men, which include doctors, surgeons, MDs, and druggists, are represented by eight trustees with clergy alone providing five. This first trustee list for the 1768 enclosure act therefore shows that it had a diverse social make-up, determined by the overall number of trustees being quite large, but there was still a heavy weighting towards corporation members and the professionals who formed the main part of the urban elite at this time.[76] Unfortunately, the keeping of a minute book for this first act was not required so determining which trustees were most active is difficult.

[76] *An Act for Selling Part of a Green called Nun's Green, 1768* (DLSL Acc.6330) for the trustee list with poll books and the *Derby Mercury* used to cross-check trades and political persuasion.

One result of the Nuns Green act of 1768 was that it turned a strip of enclosed land into what became the principal residential street in Georgian Derby which encapsulated the ideals of the Georgian urban flowering with its grand, fashionable neoclassical townhouses on a wide uniform street. This street, now part of Friargate but for many years after the act still referred to as Nuns Green, demonstrated the impact of new cultural ideas concerning the use and organisation of space for the improvement of urban society.[77] The celebrated local architect, Joseph Pickford (1734-1782), was involved in the purchase of 5 lots and built on 3 and possibly 4 of them including his celebrated townhouse.[78] This act also pre-dates the attempts to improve the rest of the town through paving and lighting shown in the previous chapter, and therefore can be seen as solely benefitting the urban elite who sought to emulate the metropolis and other polite centres which were improving their urban areas through newly built streets. The 1768 act did promise wider benefits, citing the improvement of the rest of Nuns Green as the reason for enclosing a small part of it and selling plots of land. However, these measures were either never fully implemented, or their effects were limited, because one of the justifications for the sale of the green in the second improvement act was that it was still a waste land and not fit for use. The breaking of this promise, and what opponent's saw as financial misconduct, became a key point of controversy during the enclosure disputes between 1789 and 1792.

On November 23rd 1789, a meeting was held to propose a bill for the purpose of paving and lighting the town of Derby which had been attempted several times previously but without success. As with the 1768 act, anyone with property rated at £10 per year or above was able to serve as a commissioner but, unlike the previous act, we are able to determine that the proceedings were largely controlled by a single person, William Strutt (1756-1830). The commissioners also saw the necessity to introduce a tax to subsidise the cost of the improvements should the sale of lots not be sufficient to make all the necessary changes and it is this that caused the most controversy. The tax was proposed to include all houses rated between £5 and £10 but would not include business premises or manufactories and would automatically exclude all those who were eligible to serve as commissioners. This pre-committee had created what they

[77] Elliott, *The Derby Philosophers*, p. 117.
[78] Craven, *Illustrated History of Derby*, p. 113.

thought was a 'design so highly beneficial to the public' that it would not be obstructed by 'ill-founded prejudices'.[79] Instead, it generated significant opposition expressed through broadsides, pamphlets, meetings, petitions and counter-petitions.

From the first proposal of the measure in 1789 to its eventual ratification in 1792, a pamphlet war ensued as both sides entrenched their position citing practical and more personal reasons for supporting or opposing such a measure. This section will show how this pamphlet war involved all the themes already discussed in this thesis as the debate included political, social, and economic issues that were central to Derby in this period. The rights of the burgesses, the self-electing nature of the political and cultural oligarchy, plus the financial burdens of the labouring sort were all cited as reasons to oppose the bill. Even though it was the strongest opposition to an improvement measure experienced by the town, it still passed, led by the same coterie of urban elites that have been discussed throughout this thesis.

Opposition to enclosure was common though it tended not to be as vociferous as the agitation associated with food riots, political demonstrations, and other challenges to central authority. Often, it took the form of 'passive grumbling, sometimes expressed in threatening letters, or in individual acts of sabotage rather than large-scale disorder.'[80] It could, however, become angry and lead to destruction of property or hostile targeting of individuals. Usually the focus for discontent 'was the concentration of power in the hands of a group whose political or religious views did not represent those of the whole community.' The fact that many corporate bodies were self-elected 'facilitated such divergences' and this was especially the case in Derby where the improvement commissioners drew antipathy through being 'enlightenment men'.[81] Opposition was also based on the cost of improvements falling disproportionately on the lower classes who would see much less benefit, or an economic or political power that saw a loss in income from such improvements. This 'politics of improvement' therefore centred more

[79] *Report of the Committee, appointed at a General Meeting of the Inhabitants of Derby, held on Monday Nov. 23rd 1789 to prepare a plan for more effectively Paving and Lighting the Streets* (DLSL Acc. 6330); *An Act for paving, cleansing, lighting, and otherwise improving the Streets, Lanes, and other public Passages and Places within the Borough of Derby; and for selling a certain Piece of Waste Ground, situate within the said Borough, called Nun's Green, towards defraying the Expence of the said Improvements, 1792* (DLSL Acc. 4646).
[80] John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1832*, 2nd ed. (New York: 1992) p. 52
[81] Innes and Rogers, 'Politics and Government', p. 539

on an 'evolving consensus about best practice' rather than improvement itself.[82] This 'politics of improvement' manifested during the Derby enclosure debates through both the fact the tax was not levied on commissioners or rich industrialists and also that there was a fear that the lots of the enclosed green, particularly those bordering the Markeaton brook which ran through the middle, would be snapped up by mill-owners and would turn the green into an industrialised area.

The levying of a tax became the primary concern of middling sorts opponents of the bill who would fall within the qualifying boundaries. These opponents were quick to assert the arbitrary levying of the tax with an anti-tax petition claiming that the mode of assessment was 'unjust and unequal' as 'Mills, Malthouses, Warehouses…will not be liable to contribute anything towards the expense'.[83] The owners of the exempt businesses would be eligible to serve as commissioners and would most likely be resident in the streets targeted for improvement, so it is of no surprise that this became the focus of opposition. The tax was also only supposed to be levied if the sale of the plots of land did not generate enough money to cover the improvements. Had it been made superfluous by the raising of funds by other means, the tax might have been avoided and therefore opposition curtailed, but it was instigated from the start. It attracted opposition from the bill's most outspoken critic Daniel Parker Coke, who as we have seen, was formerly MP for Derby but by then sat for Nottingham yet still resided in the town. In a letter directed to 'The Inhabitants of Derby', Coke summarised the main argument of the opposition. He asked what could be the 'reason for calling the tax' before the sale of the entire green had been undertaken. Whilst the committee had 'Money in their hands' he confessed he was 'at a loss to conjecture' why they had done this.[84]

A petition was published which contained just under 1500 names who were against the sale of the land, the tax, or both. As this petition came 15 years after the last contested election and 5 years before Derby's first trade directory, and the number of petitioners is double that of the number of voters it is difficult to determine the political or social

[82] Innes and Rogers, 'Politics and Government', pp. 541-2
[83] *Petition signed Edward Chamberlain, against the bill. "The humble petition of the several persons whose names are hereunto subscribed on Behalf of themselves and others, owners, and occupiers of houses in the borough of Derby"* (DLSL acc. 6330).
[84] *To the inhabitants of the town of Derby, Daniel Parker Coke, Jan 3rd 1793*, Acts of Parliament, Derby, 1768 (DLSL 6330).

character of the petitioners but a few judgements can be made. Firstly, of those who could be identified from the 1775 poll book, it is a roughly even split between Whig voters and Tory voters. 20 of the signees describe themselves as 'Gent.' with all those whose politics could be determined being Tory. Also, 289 signees of the petition were women which despite being a small number in comparison to male signees, still suggests a greater degree of female involvement than in other areas of public life.[85] There also does not seem to have been one particular set of industries or trades that prevailed, nor did opponents necessarily come from those areas of the town surrounding the green suggesting there was diverse opposition to the measure.

Not only was the unfair tax referred to by pamphlets but also the ambiguity of common right. One pamphlet written 'to the inhabitants of the town of Derby' spoke directly of Nuns Green belonging to them and that they would 'do well not hastily to part with those valuable rights which you received from your forefathers, and which you ought to transmit whole and entire to your posterity.'[86] Thus enclosure debate became part of the wider battle between the benches of the corporation and the wider body of freemen shown by the fact that corporation members were more likely to be found supporting the enclosure of Nuns Green whereas the average freeman made up the majority of the anti-enclosure petition that appeared. With urban improvement bringing 'renewed prominence to issues of accountability and responsibility in government' in the later-eighteenth century, and the right to common land being one of the primary liberties freemen were willing to protect, it is no surprise that such a division existed.[87]

Although petitions were sent to parliament including over 1500 names and the pamphlets created during the debate reached a much wider proportion of the citizenry than was usual for an improvement act, this dissension was not reflected in Parliament where the act was passed in 1792. It is important not to assume that a lack of evidence demonstrates as a lack of will but public dissension over the 1792 act appears to have disappeared after the act was passed. The act created a commission that was to clear

[85] Peter Collinge, 'Enterprise, Activism and Charity: Mary Pickford and the Urban Elite of Derby, 1780-1812', in *Midland History* (45:1, 2020), pp. 51-2.
[86] *A Caution, to the Inhabitants of the Town of* Derby, September 7th 1791 (DLSL 6330).
[87] Rosemary Sweet, 'Freemen and Independence in English Borough Politics c.1770-1830', in *Past & Present* (No 161, November 1998), p. 87.

the land, separate into plots for sale, and use the profits to pave and light the rest of the town, which will be discussed now.

Derby's Improvement Commission

Several attempts were made in the latter half of the eighteenth century in Derby to place all the improvements mentioned in this chapter so far under one committee in an all-encompassing act of Parliament. General improvement acts provided an opportunity to find the resources necessary for betterment of the townscape and also shaped the direction of measures. Corporations did usually support improvement measures such as the re-laying of roads and pavements, provision of lamps and better bridges, but their actions were constrained by the nature and sources of their income, conditions attached to bequests and sometimes by political divisions. Improvement acts usually provided for new, larger and more regular sources of income to pay for proposed measures. In some cases, improvement acts and the commissions they created provided an opportunity for urban elites to circumvent corporations and parishes and in some towns they became rival power bases to established government bodies. At Derby, however, there was a general consensus amongst the urban and rural elite about the nature of improvements required although as we have seen in the case of the Nuns Green dispute, there could be passionate disagreement about how these were to be funded.

Corfield has described the promotion of improvement commissions as evidence of a 'force of pressure for change' regardless of how effective or successful they were, for which Jones and Falkus concurred, describing commissions as an improvement in themselves.[88] They were created for the smoother functioning of acts of Parliament, taking responsibility for improvement away from parishes or corporate bodies who could not or would not handle it themselves. In towns without a corporation, commissions often became the 'only effective local authority', as was the case in Manchester.[89] In Derby, the improvement commission eventually became synonymous with the corporation not through a mutual understanding of their roles amongst urban

[88] Penelope J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: 1982), p. 158; Jones and Falkus, 'Urban Improvement', p. 131.
[89] Reed, 'Transformation of Urban Space', p. 625.

government, in fact, as will be shown, they often butted heads, but because they shared members.

This section will examine the activities of the commissioners of the 1792 Paving and Lighting act who had powers to 'improve' many parts of the town. Improvement commissions became an essential part of urban government in many places, taking responsibilities away from the justices, the parishes, and the corporation. This section will show how a small number of elites, although facing opposition and at times divided amongst themselves on specific aspects, were able to enact wide changes, not just in paving and lighting the town, but through turning a large area of common land into a new residential and manufacturing area. This residential area turned into Derby's worst slums of the nineteenth century whilst factories were built on many plots meaning that manufacturers, including those who supported the bill and served on the commission, were the primary beneficiaries of the act. The demarcation line between the gentrified Friargate, the result of the 1768 enclosure act, and the 1792 enclosure of the rest of Nuns' Green, also serves as the physical representation of one of the major themes of this thesis: that Derby moved away from its polite status towards becoming an industrial centre but for a while, the two existed side by side.

The minute book of the Derby Improvement Commission established by the 1792 Paving and Lighting Act provides complete attendance lists for meetings and a description of decisions taken until 1825 when the act was renewed. The attendance lists are particularly important as although there are many surviving trustee lists for turnpikes, navigations, and other acts of Parliament that relate to Derby, it is difficult to ascertain which trustees were most involved as minute books for these acts do not appear to have survived. This is also the case for the first improvement act for 1768 whose actions can only be determined by advertisements in the *Derby Mercury* which showed certain actions they took plus the occasional lists of members when important decisions were made. Analysis of the Derby Improvement Commission minutes between 1792 and 1825 however, demonstrates that although there was a high turnover in members, a small core of commissioners led by William Strutt dominated proceedings. The commission was also able to overcome dissent fairly easily, pulling rank over the parishes, the townspeople, and the corporation during times of contention caused by unclear responsibilities.

The most regular attendee was William Strutt who attended 65 of the 75 meetings between 1792 and 1825. During the first few years of the commission the group of attendees was limited. William Strutt's friend and fellow Derby Philosophical Society member, Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) came occasionally as did his son, the lawyer Erasmus Darwin jun. (1759-1799). Other attendees included Thomas Evans (1723-1814), who was Strutt's father-in-law, Charles Upton (1752-1814) who was Evans' son-in-law, plus members of other important local manufacturing families like Samuel (1765-1851) and Francis Fox (1759-1833), Daniel and Samuel Lowe, John Bateman, and James Simpson. William Snowden began attending in 1793 but for the first two years no more than 10 individuals appeared at any one time. A minimum of seven was needed to attend the annual commissioner meetings to make them quorate and five was required for valid regular meetings, so this would not have affected proceedings. Of the 14 individuals who attended in the first two years, all were connected, directly or indirectly, with William Strutt. Between 1794 and 1801, the average number of attendees varied between five and eight with a handful of names being added to the roster. Between 1801 and 1810 there was a gap in meetings, however, the committee no doubt continued to undertake business. When regular meetings were re-established in 1810, there were new trustees but there was still much continuity. William Strutt remained as chairman and the committee members added in 1810 contained many of the family names connected to the original trustees and well as to the professional and manufacturing core of the urban elite such as the philanthropist, and brother to William, Joseph Strutt, John Crompton (1753-1834) of the banking dynasty and the lawyer William Jeffrey Lockett (1768-1839).[90]

The limited representation of the commission sometimes caused controversy particularly in the late-eighteenth century when issues of agency were at the forefront of national politics. The identification of the Derby commissioners as coming almost solely from the 'philosophical class' was picked up in the pamphlet war that erupted before and during the passing of the 1792 act. Anyone who met the property qualification could attend so the fact that this small group of inter-connected urban elites maintained a hegemony over this commission highlights that they formed the core of the urban elite at this time. Borsay has found that improvement could 'provoke

[90] *Paving and Lighting Minute Book 1792-1824* (DLSL DBR/B/55).

strong resistance if it posed a threat to the economic livelihood and power of local residents.[91] This does not appear to have been the case in Derby as the commissioners represented the economic power of the borough and, later on in the life of the commission, the political power too. This is evident in a meeting of 1812 where there was a joint resolution between the commission and the corporation over the bill the latter owed for road repairs in certain areas of the town under their jurisdiction amounting to over £600 since 1794, a considerable sum. For this meeting, William Strutt represented the corporation effectively rubber stamping the decision made with the commission he had led for the previous 20.[92]

The fact that the Derby Paving and Lighting commission created by the 1792 act lasted, with a break in meetings but not business in 1801 and 1810, until 1825, shows that its business had tacit approval, at least amongst the urban elite. According to Glover, the 1792 improvement act was 'acted upon with energy, taste, and judgement' whilst the commissioners merited the thanks of the community for the 'spirit, intelligence, and prudence', with which they had 'employed the parliamentary powers intrusted to them.'[93] According to Sweet, improvement commissioners were 'seldom paragons of efficiency' and in fact often demonstrated some of the same weaknesses of corporations which included 'non-attendance, irregular book keeping and indifference.'[94] The longevity of the Derby commission and Strutt's continuous leadership demonstrates that in its own terms it succeeded, retaining the confidence of urban elites and rural nobility, even if it could not efface growing social divisions in the borough and its improvements were largely confined to the main streets.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how important improvements were to Derby's urban renaissance transformation. It has, however, also shown that these developments were largely confined to the wealthier area of the borough. Furthermore, whilst they changed the lives of the middling sorts and urban elite, the measures were much less beneficial to the labouring population and urban poor. The streetlamps and paving projects were

[91] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, p. 8.
[92] *Paving and Lighting Minute Book 1792-1824*, 20th May 1812 (DLSL DBR/B/55).
[93] Glover, *Glover's Derby*, p. 8.
[94] Sweet, *The English Town*, p. 113.

limited to principal thoroughfares. Urban improvements sought to provide a cleaner, more beautified, genteel, and ordered townscape to further trade and commerce, which only benefitted the urban elite, exacerbating existing divisions between rich and poor.

The partial enclosure of Nuns Green in 1768 shows that by only enclosing a small section of the green whilst ensuring the profits went to the beautification of the remaining part, some sense of a unified consensus towards the improvements was evident. The result of the first act was the extension of Friargate into a large, airy, neo-classical thoroughfare with high-quality townhouses. The profits from the sale of the land do not, however, appear to have been used as intended for the upkeep of the remaining part of the green. In fact, as the agitation associated with the 1792 act demonstrates, the green had deteriorated and the commissioners from the 1768 act were able to pass on a large sum of money to the new commissioners.

The failure of the 1768 act trustees to carry through their promise to beautify the rest of Nun Green led to the 1792 act which was justified based on the poor condition of the green and the need the enclose it to pay for improvements elsewhere. Other improvement projects in Derby had generated some opposition but the 1792 act prompted significant controversy which focussed on the enclosure of the Green, the tax proposed to make up any shortfall from the sale of the enclosed land, and the identification of the pro-enclosure faction as synonymous with members of the Derby Philosophical Society and the wider urban elite.

Conclusion

Derby's urban elite in the eighteenth century was amorphous, changing and adapting to reflect the wider political, cultural, and social changes experienced by the borough in this period. As the influence of the rural nobility receded from the town in the mid-century to be replaced by that of prosperous manufacturers and professionals, so too did the urban elite reflect these changes. The new wealth generated by middling sort culture, the success of manufacturing enterprises in the town, and the increased toleration and presence of dissenters led to such a shift in the identity of the urban elite. This was also facilitated by the shifting importance of Derby's administrative bodies as the old governing entities such as the parishes and the corporation were replaced by improvement commissions who took on many of the responsibilities for regulating the town.

Applications of the ideals of the new manufacturing and professional urban elites also resulted in substantial changes to Derby's physical and cultural fabric, leading to an urban renaissance similar to that experienced in other Georgian centres though one that was patchy and occurred later than in other towns in the midlands and south-east. Although the influence of the rural nobility in the early-eighteenth century led to projects such as the Derwent Navigation and later the building of cultural buildings such as the assembly rooms and the theatre, it was the new urban elite that enacted the most control over urban space. This was manifested through the regulation of the market, the drive for improvement through paving and lighting, the building of the Derby Canal and enclosure of Nuns Green, plus the rise of middling sorts associational culture in clubs, societies often meeting in inns and alehouses.

This thesis has shown the shift of influence in eighteenth-century Derby from rural nobility to the middling sorts who became a new urban elite, and the changes in control over urban space caused by this change. It is evident in the physical and commercial improvements that occurred between 1760 and 1800 as shown in chapters five and seven, where a small section of Derby's society was actively attempting to 'improve' the situation of the town through making the river Derwent navigable and building a canal to improve communication links with the wider national commercial networks in all

compass directions. This was also seen during the mayoralties of Samuel Crompton II (1714-1782) and Henry Flint (d. 1792) in 1767-8 and 1786-7 respectively, in the advertisements in the *Derby Mercury* by the corporation, serving as Justices of the Peace, threating action against those townspeople causing nuisances and negatively affecting urban space.

The influence of the rural nobility was never fully extinguished in this period although it did diminish and the evidence shows an urban elite generally working with the rural nobility rather than against it, which supports Hunt's argument that the middling sorts was not seeking to replace the rural elite.[1] The corporation in benefitted from aristocratic influence especially during elections where the interference of the Cavendish Family was essential to maintaining the Whig oligarchy in the borough. Improvement projects also required the cooperation of the rural nobility either as patrons, subscribers, or as landowners. Having said this, the primary drive behind improvement came from the urban elite.

This is why certain urban elite figures appeared in multiple administrative and improvement bodies especially if they were members of the professions whose expertise was especially sought after. For example, the banker, Samuel Crompton II, held in 1768 the positions of mayor of Derby (which also made him a Justice of the Peace), High Sheriff of Derbyshire, and Receiver General of Derbyshire whilst also serving as a trustee and treasurer for the Nuns Green enclosure act of that year. Around the same time, the lawyer, John Gisborne served as MP for Derby and urban agent for the Cavendish family. Both of these men appeared regularly taking part in corporation business and supporting improvements as trustees and subscribers. Likewise, both demonstrate the longevity of the Derby elite as they came from illustrious Derby families whose influence stretched back into the seventeenth century and whose effect on the town's physical fabric is found in the elegant townhouses built by them and their ancestors.

The multitude of subscription and trustee lists for various projects as well as the attendee lists for administrative bodies generated in Derby in the eighteenth century are the best signifier of the shift within the urban elite from the rural nobility to the

[1] Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort* (Berkely, CA, 1996), pp. 1-4.

middling sorts and professionals. Those created for improvement projects highlight this with the manufacturers and professionals dominating proceedings in the latter half of the eighteenth-century whereas at the beginning of the century they were largely dominated by the nobility and gentry. Although the parish and the corporation were made up of the more prosperous middling sorts throughout this period, these bodies still required external help, mostly legal and financial, and increasingly turned towards urban professionals rather than rural gentry.

Control of urban space was divided between such administrative bodies and the importance of each one also shifted over the century. The five parish vestries were the most socially diverse urban administrative bodies allowing for a greater degree of inclusion amongst the parishioners although day-to-day running still fell on a small group of the leading parish officials. By the end of the period, they had lost other responsibilities, such as road repair, firefighting, and the watch, to improvement commissions, leaving the administration of the poor law as their primary responsibility. The poor law connected middling sorts vestry members with the urban poor and we find many future aldermen serving on vestries as their first foray into urban governance. The role of the corporation throughout the period also changed. After the demise of the Company of Mercers, it took on many of the roles concerning the control of the market, checking weights and measures and controlling apprentices.

The top-level corporation members, serving as justices of the peace, were the smallest yet most influential group, whose position became most notable during periods of strife, such as riots, when their actions would determine the level of public disturbance experienced by the town. Before the advent of the improvement commissions, the justices were part of the push for urban improvement though they failed to get enough support from the town, instead focussing on micromanaging nuisances and limited changes such as new lighting and street cleaning. Only with the 1792 Paving and Lighting act was an all-encompassing commission created to enact widescale changes in the borough. The social make-up of the commission was much more socially limited than the other administrative bodies and highlights how far the ruling elite had changed, with dissenting professionals and manufacturers forming the core attendees whilst many members were connected to the philosophical and enlightenment circle that existed in the borough by this time.

The arguments surrounding the passing of the 1792 Paving and Lighting Act demonstrate the contentious nature of what sometimes passed for 'improvement' and challenges faced by improvers especially when their plans involved infringement on the rights or livelihoods some of the town's population. Thus, the enclosure of Nuns Green caused much consternation leading to a vociferous opposition found in contemporary pamphlets and broadsides. Part of the green had been enclosed previously in 1768, when the approval of public opinion was not needed for enclosure to go ahead. This first enclosure was perhaps more palatable to the people of the town as the money that was generated was only to go to the improving of the rest of the green which was to remain a common. When the enclosure of the rest of the green was suggested in 1789 it not only drew criticism from those believing the green was protected by the first enclosure act, but also drew arguments over wider burgess rights. The resulting pamphlet war questioned whether the corporation, as mere stewards of the land, had the right to enclose the green merely on the whim of the current incumbents of corporate office. It also raised arguments over the benefits of the Green to the town economy and its people. The opponents of enclosure saw it as essential to the livelihoods of poor folk who used it for grazing, collecting furze, and being a support to trades whereas proponents saw it as wasteland with a very limited benefit. The result of the act, as with other attempts at urban improvement, was that it increased social divisions so that they were now visible rather than just cultural. The task of paving and lighting the town, although affecting a much wider area than previous attempts, still prioritised the wealthier areas whilst those in poorer areas appear to have taken it upon themselves to begin improvement.

Compared to its regional neighbours, Nottingham and Leicester, Derby was smaller in size and population, had a narrower sphere of influence, and had stronger connections to its rural hinterland than national networks. Its position, surrounded by more important manufacturing and leisure towns, also ensured that Derby's progress was limited.

Yet the town showed a greater propensity towards improvement, having a commission established before the others possibly due to the urban elite being predominantly Whig with leading members having interests in commercial improvement and enlightenment ideas as opposed to Leicester where the town was controlled by a small Tory, Anglican

corporation elite and Nottingham where there was a strong opposition to enclosure and a large number of burgesses defending their rights to common land.

This thesis has focussed primarily on the eighteenth century when the urban elite became distinctly middling sort, especially later in the period, but further study is required to investigate this process further. The disjointed and unequal benefits of improvement also led to a demarcation line between the gentrified, well-paved and well-lit areas of the town, and places occupied by industries, manufactures and the poorer sort slums, particularly those formed following the enclosure of Nuns' Green. The rural gentry thus began to remove themselves physically and culturally from Derby. Concurrently, manufacturers strengthened their position as part of the urban elite as Derby's industry boomed, particularly with the coming of the railway, whilst large charitable projects such as the Arboretum (1840), gifted to the town by Joseph Strutt (1765-1844), and the Derby Infirmary (1810), designed and built by William Strutt (1756-1830), were founded.

Eighteenth-century Derby's urban society was split vertically through politics and religion and horizontally through economic and social differences. The interaction between these groups, which either peacefully or tempestuously crossed these divides, engendered a limited urban renaissance in the town led by a small faction of homosocial and politically non-diverse middling sort professionals and industrialists. Dissenters benefitted from the loosening of rules governing non-conformity in public office, the increase in economic wealth of industrialised urban centres which reinforced the influence of the middling sorts, and the break-down of traditional forms of urban government which were superseded by improvement commissions (supported by the emergent middle class). The Municipal Corporation Acts of 1835, although not increasing the size of the town's electorate helped to foster a closer relationship between the corporation and urban electorate whilst the repeal of various restrictive religious barriers ensured that by the early-nineteenth century, the corporation, the vestries and the improvement commissions were overlapping. A focussed study of this transition from pre-reform to post-reform politics in Derby is certainly needed but unquestionably the town's nineteenth-century industrial prosperity was hastened by the political, social and cultural changes and frictions experienced during the eighteenth century.

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