

**THE LEICESTERSHIRE GENTRY
AND ITS SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NETWORKS c. 1790-1875**

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the gentry in the county of Leicestershire during a period of transition, from an age defined by the supremacy of the landed classes, to one which presaged the emergence of an urban, industrial democracy. The thesis examines changes in the character and identity of the gentry as a social group, and its social, cultural and political roles.

Leicestershire has been selected for study as it was essentially a 'middling' county. The gentry had maintained a strong presence there from the medieval period and had provided many of its members of parliament, justices and other office holders. Unlike in some of its neighbours, the nobility did not, in the eighteenth century at least, dominate the county politically. During the nineteenth century, the number of lesser 'squirearchy,' whose development has sometimes been studied less than that of major, aristocratic landowners, was increasing in the county.

Part One defines and identifies the gentry. It traces changes to its composition over the period, and notes the effect of new entrants on its structure and nature. This part also assesses the wealth of the gentry and its spending. It further shows that few members of the industrial elite in the rapidly growing borough of Leicester attempted to enter landed society.

Part Two examines the culture of the gentry in its social and political setting. It considers patterns of education and marriage among a representative sample of Leicestershire gentry families, and their public and professional roles. This part looks in particular at the growth of networks of influence and authority, which extended beyond the county in a nationwide web of connections based on shared values and interests. It is argued that their development helped the gentry retain some influence in society when its political power was beginning to fade.

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Peter Shipley
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Some amendments were made to the thesis in May 2011 (mainly in the first section of chapter 4 and in related appendices) to take account of a re-examination of some previously used sources relating to the composition and origins of the 'lesser' and 'fringe' gentry in the 1870s. The opportunity was also taken to correct some other minor textual errors and clarify some footnotes.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bateman	<i>The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland</i> (1883)
BLG	Burke's <i>Landed Gentry</i> (various editions, 1843-1898)
BPB	Burke's <i>Peerage & Baronetage</i> (various editions, 1826-2003)
EconHR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office
Fletcher	W. G. D. Fletcher, <i>Leicestershire Pedigrees and Royal Descents</i> (1887)
JBS	Journal of British Studies
LJ	<i>Leicester Journal</i> (weekly, 1780-1875)
Namier & Brooke	L. B. Namier & J. Brooke (eds.), <i>History of Parliament - The House of Commons 1754-1790</i> , 3 vols. (1964)
Nichols	John Nichols, <i>The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester</i> , 4 vols. (1795-1811)
ODNB	H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Eds.), <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , 30 vols. (Oxford, 2004)
PP	Parliamentary Papers
ROL	<i>Return of Owners of Land 1873</i> , Parliamentary Papers, LXXII, C.1097, (1874)
ROLLR	Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland
Thorne	R. G. Thorne (ed.), <i>History of Parliament - The House of Commons 1790-1820</i> , 5 vols. (1986)
Throsby	John Throsby, <i>Select Views in Leicestershire</i> , 2 vols. (1790)

- TLAHS *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* (1855-2009; the Leicestershire Archaeological Society until 1955)
- TNA The National Archives
- TRHS *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
- VCH *Victoria County History of Leicestershire*, 5 vols, (Oxford, 1907-64)
- Walford Edward Walford, *County Families of the United Kingdom* (various, 1860-78)

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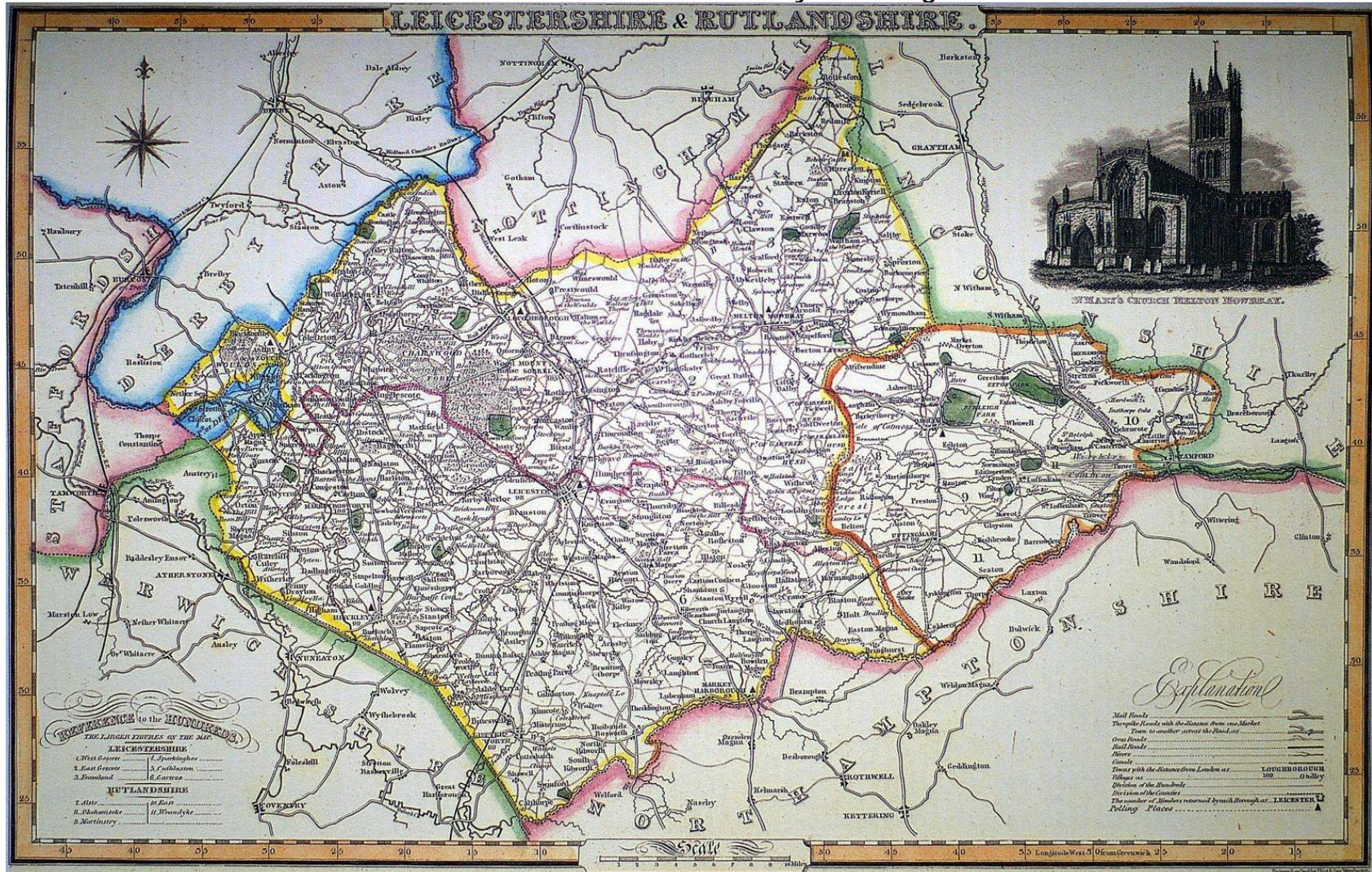
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Leicestershire and Rutland in 1840 by James Pigot



1. Introduction: Scope, Aims and Methods

Between the end of the eighteenth century and the opening of the final quarter of the nineteenth, the gentry moved from a 'golden age' to the beginning of a long, gradual decline. Since the medieval period it had occupied a pivotal position in English society. Its members were leading landowners from the age of feudalism to that of capitalist land management and ranked in status - and generally in wealth - between the nobility and the yeomen. They were social and political leaders in the counties where they had their roots and served as members of parliament, justices and sheriffs. As landlords and figures of authority their actions affected the lives of large sections of the rural population. A few ranged more widely, to find a role, culturally or politically, on a national stage. Enduring though its presence was, the gentry was not as a group static or unchanging. To accomplish and sustain this degree of predominance over such a broad span of time and across so many spheres, its members repeatedly adapted to the prevailing economic conditions and to new political circumstances. The composition of the gentry was ever evolving. Old families died out or declined and new entrants, sometimes from business or the professions, and sometimes from the ranks of slowly rising smaller landowners, took their place.

Any new study of the gentry must at the outset acknowledge a large body of work which has described and discussed these developments.¹ In place of a separate literature review, the debates that these studies have opened on topics such as patterns of landownership, the 'openness' or otherwise, of the elite, its financial position and the extent to which the landed classes retained their status and influence into the Victorian era, will be discussed and in some aspects re-assessed throughout the thesis. At this point however, the purpose is to recognise the foundation of all further study which this literature represents and to offer, in the course of this preliminary chapter, an explanation of why a new exploration into the field is being undertaken.

This introduction describes the aims and scope of the thesis and sets out the reasons why the gentry is being studied, why this period has been chosen and why the county of Leicestershire has been selected as the focus of study. It summarises the main arguments and structure of the thesis and goes on to outline the research methods and how the material was organised and analysed.

¹ Essential texts for this period include H. J. Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estates System: English Landownership 1650-1950* (Oxford, 1994); G. E. Mingay, *The Gentry: the Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class* (1976); F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (1963); J. V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914*, (Oxford, 1986), Lawrence & Jeanne C. F. Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984, revised 2001); Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman* (Oxford, 1990); David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy* (1984).

Period & Scope

This thesis examines the development of the gentry in the county of Leicestershire during a period of transition from a society dominated by the landed classes, towards the formation of an urban, industrial democracy. The experience of the gentry during these years is central to understanding how a part of the former ruling elite adapted and responded – with varying degrees of success- to the myriad changes of the time. The thesis considers primarily the social, cultural and political role of the gentry. It examines how it was able to retain its position in some spheres while losing ground in others and how it reached some degree of accommodation with new elites in society. The story of the gentry over this time is therefore partly a story of how this wider transition in society was accomplished. The thesis is less concerned with some other questions, such as the technicalities of estate management and agricultural improvement, or the effects of enclosure on patterns of landholding, agricultural practice or landscape.² Equally, some matters concerning the internal dynamics of the family have been

² For enclosure, see H. G. Hunt, *The Parliamentary Enclosure Movement in Leicestershire 1730-1842*, University of London, PhD thesis (1956). After 1790, some 40 parliamentary enclosure acts were passed for Leicestershire, compared with 104 between 1760 and 1790. Half of the county had been enclosed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

only partly considered, including some aspects of inheritance and dynastic settlements.

Most historical periods are to some extent times of transition and all are fraught with the danger of artificial division. This is especially true of the centuries into which this period falls. As one historian of the two hundred years from 1680 to 1880 remarked: "no other segment of British history contains such a bewildering variety of demarcations."³ The selected period corresponds however to one much favoured by recent historians who have been concerned with the origins of modern, industrial Britain.⁴ Nonetheless, it is clear that many of the foundations of economic progress – and of the latterly disputed concept of the 'industrial revolution' - had been laid earlier.⁵ The first half of the period was however a time of uncertainty and conflict as much as of progress. As Linda Colley has remarked it was: "one of the most formative and violent periods in the making of modern Britain and in the making of the modern world – a time of accelerating industrialisation

³ Richard Price, *British Society 1680-1880* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 3.

⁴ Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (1959); Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, (1969) and Eric Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State – Early industrial Britain 1783-1870* (1983).

⁵ See N. F. R. Crafts, *British economic growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1985).

and urbanisation, of growing class consciousness and demands for reform, of revolution in France and war in Europe.”⁶

The effects of these events were felt locally as well as nationally and globally. In Leicestershire, many of those sections of the gentry which had previously identified with the Whig cause switched their allegiance during the 1790s to Pitt, in support of the war against revolutionary France and of firm measures to deal with the perceived threat of Jacobinism at home. This shift laid the foundations for a solid – and sometimes unyielding - Toryism among the gentry in the nineteenth century. At the same time, members of the gentry gradually became re-engaged with public business, as magistrates and as officers in the newly-formed yeomanry. The 1790s also saw a burst of canal building which facilitated trade and the transport of coal and goods, and presaged the expansion of the borough of Leicester and its industrial development. In addition, the decade also saw the publication of two indispensable works for the study of the county and its landed classes, the first volume of John Nichol's *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, which was not completed until 1815, and Throsby's two volume *Select Views in Leicestershire*.

⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons – Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992), p. 149, describing the half century that followed the outbreak of the American War of Independence.

At a convenient midway point in the period stands 1832, the year in which, in the view of some historians, the unreformed *ancien regime* finally came to its end, and with it the 'long eighteenth century'.⁷ Beginning with parliamentary reform, the 1830s saw a succession of social and institutional changes which directly or indirectly affected the gentry, including the restructuring of municipal government, which radically altered relations between the borough and county of Leicester, a new poor law, which took authority away from magistrates, reforms in the church, the birth of the railways and arguably the most important economic reform, the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, a measure strenuously resisted by many of the Leicestershire gentry. By the beginning of the following decade, England had entered a period of sustained social stability and prosperity in which the value of land and rents rose markedly, greatly to the benefit of landowners, until the depression which began in the mid-1870s. There are therefore some clear distinctions between the two halves of the period. A dividing line could have been drawn elsewhere, in the mid-1840s for example, but this would have unbalanced the overall time span and the year 1832 carries still a resonance in British history as well as conveniently dissecting the period. The choice of 1832 as a landmark dividing line is not however intended as a comment on arguments surrounding the

⁷ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832* (Cambridge, 2000 edition); Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century* (1997).

manner of the demise of an essentially aristocratic, confessional state in favour of a more secular, liberal and democratic one, although it is argued here that that process began before the 1820s and 1830s and continued long after it.

The ending of the period, the mid-1870s, marked a watershed in the history of the gentry. It saw the beginnings of an agricultural depression in which land prices fell dramatically, and a new round of social and political reform in the following decade, as a result of which, in the words of J. H. Plumb, "the direct influence of the great landed families disappeared."⁸ These developments included the further extension of the franchise and the creation of county councils. Changes were also made to the law on the sale of land previously subject to the rules of 'strict settlement,' which had governed the pattern of inheritance in many major aristocratic and gentry estates since the later seventeenth century.⁹ The choice of this extended period allows the construction of the 'before' and 'after' of a range of economic, social and political reforms, and makes it possible to assess their impact on the gentry, and its leading families, over three or four generations.

⁸ J. H. Plumb, 'Political History 1530-1885', *VCH*, 2, (Oxford, 1954), p. 134.

⁹ Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 319. The Stones chose 1880 for the end of their study in *An Open Elite?* because "the 1880s mark a major turning point in the political authority of the landed elite." (2001 edition, p. 25).

The role of the gentry, particularly at the lower levels, has sometimes been neglected in narratives of this period.¹⁰ Numerous studies exist of the gentry in the medieval and early modern periods and of its role in national affairs before and during the civil war of the seventeenth century as well as in histories of its development in individual counties, including Leicestershire.¹¹ But for the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries however, historians have sometimes devoted greater attention to the richer, more powerful, altogether more glamorous – and often better documented – aristocracy, or to the emerging leaders of industry and commerce.¹² As a result, the gentry is sometimes considered as

¹⁰ Amanda Vickery commented that the lesser English gentry of this time has been “hardly researched at all.” (*The Gentleman’s Daughter – Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (1998), p. 14). The gentry is however dealt with in Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy – The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire 1832-95* (Oxford, 1996), J. T. Ward, *East Yorkshire Landed Estates in the Nineteenth Century* (Hull, 1967) and Richard Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885* (1973) and *Rural Society and County Government in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire*, (Lincoln, 1979).

¹¹ For the medieval gentry, Peter Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry* (Cambridge, 2003). County studies include Eric Acheson, *A Gentry Community in Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1991); Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity – A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992); Susan Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Derby, 1983); Katherine Naughton, *The Gentry of Bedfordshire in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Leicester, 1976); Simon Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England - The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991), and G. G. Astill, *The Medieval Gentry: A Study in Leicestershire Society 1350-1399*, Birmingham University, PhD thesis (1977). For the early modern period, Felicity Heal & Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994); Peter Roebuck, *Yorkshire Baronets 1640-1760 – Families, Estates, fortunes* (Oxford, 1980); J. M. Rosenheim, *The Emergence of a Ruling Order: English Landed Society 1650-1750* (1998).

¹² Beckett, *Aristocracy in England*; John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century – the peerage of Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1984), David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (1990); county studies of the eighteenth century include J. P. Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Elite – The Glamorgan Gentry 1640-1790* (Cambridge, 1983) and A. Gallon, *The Hampshire Gentry 1689-1800*, University of Reading, PhD thesis (1996). Work on newer elites includes Anthony Howe, *The Cotton Masters 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1984) and Richard Trainor, *Black Country Elites* (Oxford, 1993).

one element of a wider 'landed society,' in which the aristocracy took the leading role in a struggle for power and status between the landed classes in general, and a middle class which itself encompassed industrialists and manufacturers, bankers and financiers and professionals and public servants.

One of the lessons of previous studies of the gentry, and of the broader landed elite, is that generalisation is hazardous. The definition of the gentry is not precise, its character varied from place to place and the various tiers of wealth and influence within it, ranging from local squires to great landowners with access to a national stage, delineates some sharp contrasts of status, lifestyle and achievement. Equally, while one may describe and analyse the gentry as a social group with all its gradations, it was made up nationally of several thousand families whose collective identity, such as it might have been, was shaped by myriad diverse experiences, dictated by all the vagaries of life, by questions of family and succession, by money and how to get it, spend it and pass it on, and by subjective factors of personal inclination and individual weakness and ambition. The gentry was both a highly structured social group and a heterogeneous assemblage of individuals and families.

The study of the gentry requires therefore the focus provided by a sense of place. The historic identity of the gentry was derived from its association with a locality and in particular with the county. The main estates and the public and social lives of the gentry were traditionally located in one county. Its members were leaders of the 'county community' and the offices it held, such as a Knight of the Shire, magistrate or High Sherriff were defined by the administrative boundary of the county. The county of Leicestershire has been selected for several reasons. It was in many respects a 'middling' county. The 28th largest English county out of 39 in 1831, it was the smallest of a group of seven counties, which occupied areas of between 500,000 and 600,000 acres each.¹³ It was not overshadowed by London, unlike the half dozen counties adjacent to the capital, nor, like some parts of the north of England or the west midlands dominated economically by large scale or highly profitable industries; few local hosiers made large sums of money compared with northern textile or mine owners. Though varied in its topography, it is not, except for the 18,000 acres of Charnwood Forest, rugged nor can any part of it be described as remote. Comparisons will be made with some of the seven counties on which it borders, which had mixed industrial and agricultural economies. In the eighteenth century the aristocracy had been less dominant

¹³ 'An Abstract of Answers and Returns under the Population Act, 1830', *Parliamentary Papers*, cmd. 149, (1833). The other four counties included Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire.

politically in Leicestershire than in some of its neighbouring counties. It had had a strong gentry presence from the medieval period onwards, which continued into the nineteenth century. The county also had an active property market in its numerous smaller to middling-sized estates. The availability of such land, and the geographical location of the county, made it attractive to northern businessmen trying to establish themselves in landed society and to London lawyers and merchants looking for a country estate. Its appeal was further enhanced by the rise of hunting, which made Leicestershire a playground of the aristocracy and the rich throughout the period. The local industrial elite meanwhile carved out its own sphere of influence in the borough of Leicester, the population of which more than trebled in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the county, the gentry continued to exist and to function in its own domain, while its composition, status and identity were affected by the arrival of newcomers and by the wider changes in society which began to erode the concept of the 'county community' itself.

Aims & Arguments

The thesis sets out to examine developments in the character and identity of the Leicestershire gentry, in its composition and structure,

and its role in society. It argues that the nature and role of the gentry changed during this period in ways which weakened its position before the onset of economic crisis from the late 1870s onwards and the round of further political and institutional reforms in the following decade. Its influence was sustained however by the range of its networks of influence and authority which extended beyond the geographic county.

Throughout the period, the gentry was a diffuse grouping. Its nature, and its relationships with other social classes, were changing. At the end of the eighteenth century the gentry in Leicestershire lacked coherence and leadership at its highest levels, its middling and lower levels were subject to continual change, and from the 1830s onwards, it suffered some loss of influence, especially in parliamentary affairs as the gulf between the richest aristocrats and the local 'squirearchy' widened. There was also an increase in the numbers of fringe gentry who were able to support the basics of a gentleman's lifestyle with a modest estate and were able to participate in county business as magistrates for example, but very few newcomers penetrated the upper echelons of landed society. The growth of this group on the fringe of the gentry during the early and mid-Victorian era meant that its composition changed not simply in terms of the replacement of old families by new within an essentially unaltered framework, but in ways which affected

the character of the gentry as a coherent, definable social group. It became a looser grouping, even less capable of precise demarcation. The newer, gentry fringe was also less dependent for its sense of status on its relations with a subordinate class of tenant farmers or local poor than those longer-established families with large estates. They represented a new gentry for an age in which those traditional relationships, and the rural population which underpinned them, were in decay. Although the ranks of the gentry were not 'closed' to newcomers in the way suggested by Stone and others, the nature and extent of its openness did not mean that local businessmen attempted in large numbers to set themselves up as 'country gentlemen.' Few manufacturers and industrialists from Leicester even tried to achieve that status. Nor did it mean that newcomers from any background were able to go straight to the upper reaches of landed society. At the same time, the aristocracy was a resurgent force: the five largest landowners in the county at the close of the period were peers, and sons of peers accounted for two of the four county Members. Thus the old and middling gentry found themselves challenged on two fronts, between the newer fringe gentry and the nobility, while they repeatedly sparred with the middle class radicals in the borough.

Despite these challenges, the gentry's participation in the county's public life was uneven. While the gentry, for example, provided the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions for much of the period, by its end the more substantial and older families were outnumbered on the bench by 'fringe' elements and smaller landowners. Additionally, the 'county community,' which had been the traditional forum for the exercise of the gentry's social and political influence, had lost some of its identity and autonomy. Instead, the world of the Leicestershire gentry during this period became characterised by a variegated set of nationwide 'networks' and less by the traditional and cohesive 'community' prescribed by the boundaries of the geographic or administrative county. Such networks had existed for much of the eighteenth century, when, for example, visits to Bath and the London season became fashionable. They grew however during the period under study and changed in character. Gentry families married outside the county more often than within it; marriage between members of local landed families has been considered as one of the central features of the county community in previous centuries.¹⁴ Wider connections were established also by the increased numbers who attended public school and went on to university. In the eighteenth century, short spells at university or one of the Inns of Court served as a 'finishing' process for the sons of the

¹⁴ Alan Everitt, *Change in the Provinces in the Seventeenth Century* (Leicester, 1969).

landed classes, and for the wealthiest had been followed by the Grand Tour. This was interrupted from the 1790s by war, which gave a boost to internal tourism, and drew many sons of the gentry into military service. When overseas travel resumed after 1815, it became more varied. Throughout the nineteenth century, the gentry also showed a strong sense of public service, in the armed forces and the clergy, and, for those who chose to participate, in local duties as magistrates, sheriffs and Deputy Lieutenants. The character and operation of these networks will be studied as a defining feature of the gentry in the nineteenth century, and one of the keys to its persistence and influence. Yet, although they helped the gentry maintain its position in the short term, they masked the seeds of a decline in power which made it more vulnerable to events in the later Victorian period and beyond.

Methods & Structure

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One identifies and defines the gentry. It places the gentry in its historical and social context and discusses its central characteristics. It traces changes to the composition of the Leicestershire gentry, noting the effect of new entrants and the growth of a fringe gentry on its structure and outlook and goes on to estimate the wealth of the gentry, its sources of income

and its spending, and evaluates its position in relation to other social groups. Part Two examines the culture of the gentry in its wider social and political setting, and the workings of its networks across the range of its activities.

A range of unpublished and published primary sources has been used, together with a variety of secondary sources. They fall into three main groups: the modern literature on landed society, previously indicated; published contemporary sources, including newspapers and periodicals, parliamentary papers, and the numerous directories, gazetteers and professional and educational registers, which provide much information - of varying degrees of reliability - on individual lives and on families and their relationships; and thirdly, unpublished material, including tax and probate records and the papers of a selected number of families from the Leicestershire gentry.

The latter consisted of documents relating to the Frewen, Packe, Herrick, Paget and Cradock Hartopp families. These papers, including wills, family settlements, correspondence, diaries and estate papers, provided material for case studies and a narrative of the experience of individuals and families, as well as offering insights into the conduct of their affairs, culture and interests not available from other categories of

record. These families were representative of a cross-section of the Leicestershire gentry across the whole of the period. They came mainly from the middling and upper levels of the gentry. The Frewen family had estates in Sussex, while the others at various times owned property in counties neighbouring Leicestershire. The Pagets were a relatively new, rising family, while the Herricks had owned land in Leicestershire since the sixteenth century. The Frewen and Cradock Hartopp estates were subject to complex inheritance patterns involving several branches of the families. Overall however the records of the Leicestershire gentry are uneven; many families left few if any records and among the ones selected, while there are extensive estate records for the Herrick family, no personal correspondence has survived. Other families will also be referred to in the study. Among them are some for whom there is contemporary and modern biographical material, including Babington, Beaumont, Burnaby and March Phillips de Lisle. Items from the Nichols Archive Project, which includes original documents and some transcripts of John Nichols' correspondence with members of the Leicestershire gentry and above all, with Joseph Cradock, were also used, particularly in Part Two. The *Victoria County History*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* were drawn on throughout, for information on estates, individuals and families as well

as for general historical background. Full references to these and all other sources will be given in the text as they occur.

This material was organised in two databases: one containing biographical information on 5,350 people, including members of the peerage and clergy as well as the gentry, and the other on 320 villages, manors and estates in Leicestershire. Building on these sources, published and unpublished, and through the database, it was possible to identify the individual members of the Leicestershire gentry and trace changes in the composition of the gentry over the period, analyse patterns of landownership and property transactions, and to assess their wealth. In addition, it was possible to construct a picture of the gentry's family and social relationships and activities, its education, involvement in the professions, the church and in public and political life.

The three categories of material - modern, and published and unpublished primary sources - complement each other, marrying background and context with the specific experience of the individuals and families who constituted the Leicestershire gentry. This process enabled re-assessments to be made of some of the historical questions surrounding the gentry, such the 'openness' of the landed elite, the rise of landowning magnates and the continued role of smaller owners, the

extent to which the landed classes retained their former status into the mid-nineteenth century and the soundness or otherwise, of their financial position. The analysis begins, however, by expanding upon the outline definition of the 'gentry' given in the opening paragraph.

PART ONE

THE ANATOMY OF THE GENTRY

2. The Definition and Structure of the Gentry

"The landed gentry", wrote F. M. L. Thompson in his standard work, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, "came in a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes."¹ It has not always been easy therefore to describe precisely what or who they were as a group. As one, more recent, historian noted, the gentry is "a social group fraught with problems of definition."² In the view of one medievalist, there has been "a lack of rigour" in the manner in which some historians of that period have addressed the question, while another had earlier suggested that the term has been used widely and uncritically until, in the absence of an accepted definition, it has been rendered meaningless.³ Mingay, in his general survey of the gentry from its origins to the twentieth century, wrote that despite the lack of an agreed definition, and that the label was "more vague than helpful", the 'gentry' "remains an indispensable term."⁴

The opening definition offered in this thesis, that the gentry represents the layer of landowners between the peers and the yeomen, is one that has been widely accepted as a useful starting point by historians of all

¹ Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 109.

² J. H. Porter in G. E. Mingay (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, VI, 1750-1850 (1989), p. 836.

³ Coss, p. 3; Astill, p. 3.

⁴ Mingay, *Gentry*, p. 1.

periods.⁵ It creates a space in the social structure for the gentry but defines them largely by what they are not rather than what they are. At the upper reaches, it separates the gentry from the peerage formally by rank and in practice by wealth. At the lower level, it distinguishes the gentry from the yeomen by status and wealth. The gentry were not members of the House of Lords and in lifestyle and influence some distance removed from the wealthiest peers, great magnates who owned tens of thousands of acres in a half-dozen or more counties. Nor are they like the yeomen, the owners of a few score or a hundred or so acres, who worked their own land and were not eligible to hold the most prestigious county offices. But even here some qualification must be made; some members of the gentry were richer than some peers and at the lower levels they were little wealthier than the more prosperous farmers. Peers, gentry and yeomen, together with the array of professional lawyers and agents, the craftsmen and tradesmen and the labouring workforce who served them, made up rural society and its economy, each element of which was bound to the others by a mixture of duty, custom and necessity. At the centre of this framework stood the gentry. The aim of this chapter is to fill the space it occupied by answering the question of 'what was the gentry?' before moving in the following two chapters to the question of 'who were the gentry?'

⁵ It is applied, for example, by Mingay, *Gentry*, p. 3, Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p. 29, and Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, p. 1

identifying and placing within the defined framework the individuals and families who made up 'the Leicestershire gentry'.⁶

The Nature of the Gentry

Despite their variety, Thompson considered that "contemporaries were confident that they formed a reasonably homogeneous group."⁷ Habakkuk on the other hand argued that landed society, of which the gentry was an integral part, was "highly unhomogeneous in wealth and habit."⁸ It could also be argued that contemporaries did not in fact have a clearly defined view of the gentry as a distinct social group. Calculations of the social structure of England and Wales made in 1801-03 by Patrick Colquhoun contained 48 social and occupational categories; they extended from the King and peers temporal and spiritual at the pinnacle of society, to vagrants, rogues and vagabonds at its depths. The gentry however did not feature as a separate group. Instead, the social elite, embracing those who might have been described as members of the gentry, was found under separate headings for baronets, knights, esquires and "gentlemen and ladies living on income." Colquhoun's classifications were based on earlier

⁶ In discussion of the 'gentry' as a social group it appears in the singular; otherwise in the plural. As Fowler judged: "nouns of multitude may be freely used with either a singular or plural verb" (*The King's English* (Oxford, 1906, p. 77).

⁷ Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 109.

⁸ Habakkuk, *Estates System*, Preface, p. x.

models by Gregory King in 1688 and Joseph Massie in 1760, and his findings derived from the 1801 census and other official data. Whatever their shortcomings in enabling us to capture the 'gentry' as a species in its own right, the usefulness of Colquhoun's tables in offering a snapshot of a carefully graded hierarchy has proved enduring and as one recent historian has commented "modern historians have found little reason to challenge them."⁹

Within this overall picture, the precisely delineated structure of the upper classes was very apparent to contemporaries. In her novels, Jane Austen did not use so sweeping a label as 'the gentry' to describe collectively those about whom she wrote, although many of them clearly belonged to it. Instead she fixed the social position of her characters in other, more distinctive (and more elegant) ways, as the opening paragraphs of three of her novels illustrate: Sir Walter Elliot, whose favourite reading was the Baronetage, is clearly identifiable by the rank that is the most striking indicator of his personal identity and his place in society.¹⁰ The late Mr Dashwood, of a landed family long established

⁹ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 125-7. Julian Hoppit, *The New Oxford History of England - A Land of Liberty? England 1689-1727* (Oxford, 2000), reproduced King's tables, pp. 70-71; see also Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1990 edition), who compared these findings (pp. 20-1, 366-9).

¹⁰ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (1818, *The Penguin Complete Novels of Jane Austen*, (1983)), p. 1145.

at its seat of Norland Place, is "the old Gentleman".¹¹ And Miss Maria Ward raised herself by marriage "to become a baronet's lady" with a "handsome house and large income."¹² Baronets and mere Gentlemen were distinguished in her works from younger sons of landed families who are poor clergymen, or the daughters who are married to them, and from lawyers, soldiers and naval officers and the peerage.

Other very different writers were equally alive to the subtleties of the social hierarchy. Writing a decade after Jane Austen's death, William Cobbett, the Tory turned radical and the enemy of 'money-men' and great landlords, considered that there were "five ranks from the smallest gentry up to the greatest nobility" and that the bottom three, including "the smallest gentry" had disappeared in the face of a rising class of newly-rich merchants and financiers.¹³ A generation later, however, Bagehot, in his famous commentary on the English constitution, was very clear about the homogeneity of the gentry: he believed that "the numbers of the landed gentry in the House [of Commons] far surpass any other class," unjustifiably in his view. He recognised the significance of their networks: they had "a more intimate connection with one another; they are educated at the same schools; know one another's family name from boyhood; form a society; are the same kind of men;

¹¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, (1811), *Complete Novels*, p. 9.

¹² Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (1814), *Complete Novels*, p. 449.

¹³ William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (1830; 2001 edition), p. 223.

marry the same kind of women.”¹⁴ Merchant and manufacturers in parliament were on the other hand “a motley race.” Burke’s *Dictionary of the Landed Gentry*, which was first published in 1843, began life seven years earlier as a *History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, when it had listed the details of 400 families who represented the “independent country gentlemen.” In the Preface to his enlarged and re-titled work, Burke said that it could be designated a “Peerage of the Untitled Aristocracy.” The latter phrase was echoed seventeen years later by Walford in the Preface to his directory, *The County Families of the United Kingdom*, which he said could have the sub-title of a “Manual of the Titled and Untitled Aristocracy” or be styled a “Dictionary of the Upper Ten Thousand.” Walford ranged more widely than the landed gentry, in both upwards and downwards directions, and both he and Burke were doubtless trying to flatter their clientele for the best of commercial reasons. Local directories were more generous still in their estimation of who and what was the gentry. A Leicestershire directory for 1849, for example, listed a total of 667 ‘gentry’ and clergy in the main population centres of the county: 436 in the borough of Leicester alone (of whom only 36 were clergy), 56 in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, 50 each in Loughborough and Hinckley, 38 in Market Harborough and 37 in Melton Mowbray.¹⁵

¹⁴ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, (1868), pp. 163-64.

¹⁵ *Hagar & Co's Commercial Directory of the County of Leicester* (Nottingham, 1849).

In contrast to the broad sweep of Walford and the local guides, Bateman took a more restrictive view in *The Great Landowners*, the final version of which was published in 1883. Bateman based his work on the *Return of Owners of Land* carried out ten years previously and sometimes called the 'New Domesday Book,' for providing the most comprehensive survey of landowning in Britain for nearly eight hundred years.¹⁶ He did not use the term the 'gentry', preferring to describe those commoners with more than 3,000 acres and an income to match as 'great landowners' and those with between 1,000 and 3,000 acres as 'squires'. Six years before the *Return* was made, in another opening literary paragraph, Anthony Trollope gave a nod to Walford and anticipated one of Bateman's demarcation lines when he began the first of his Palliser novels with a reference to the "Upper Ten Thousand," and introduced "squire Vavasor of Vavasor Hall, in Westmoreland," who "was a country gentleman, possessing some thousand a year at the outside, and he therefore never came up to London...."¹⁷ These diverse contemporary views on the gentry help explain some of the difficulties encountered by later historians in endeavouring to define it. The gentry as a whole was a broad group, encompassing a variety of experiences and differences of wealth and distinctions of status, and with a continually changing

¹⁶ John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, (1883, reprinted 1971).

¹⁷ Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?* (1867, Oxford edition (1999)), p. 1.

composition. At any one point, however, its members were linked by certain common values and social connections that defined its character and sense of gentility, of being 'gentlemen', whether they were baronets or minor squires. This sense of identity had been long in development.

The origins of the gentry, and much of the terminology used to describe it, lie in the medieval period. By the mid-fourteenth century its principal characteristics as a high-status, landowning group were in place: it was a type of "lesser nobility," enjoyed a powerful élite culture, built initially around an exclusive land-holding knighthood but able to accommodate a professional class, and it possessed the essential components of status, office holding, authority, status gradation and a collective identity.¹⁸ Recent studies of the medieval gentry in several midlands counties, including Leicestershire, have attested to the role of the gentry as a highly structured, local elite, comprising knights, esquires and gentlemen.¹⁹

The usefulness of these labels decreases from the sixteenth century onwards. The linkage of the knights and esquires to their earlier military role had been broken, a new rank - the baronetage - had been created in 1611 (see the following section), and the labels of esquire

¹⁸ Coss, *English Gentry*, pp. 248-51.

¹⁹ Astill, *Medieval Gentry*; Acheson, *Gentry Community*; Carpenter, *Warwickshire*; Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*; Payling, *Nottinghamshire*.

and gentleman had become so widely applied that they were unreliable as a guide to who was or was not a member of the gentry. Equally, the right of a family to bear arms granted by the College of Arms cannot be considered as a defining feature of the gentry. Arms could be granted for a number of reasons, including lineage or crown service; and there seems no reason to question the conclusion of historians who have shown that in the medieval and early modern periods the process of awarding arms was flawed and that not all gentry families were armigerous.²⁰

The term 'gentleman' is an especially perilous one in the search for a definition of the 'landed gentry.' While all members of the landed gentry, from baronets to squires, were considered gentlemen, not all gentlemen were members of the landed gentry. Ever imprecise, the term 'gentleman' had become applied so widely that by the nineteenth century it was losing coherence.²¹ It came to denote modes of personal conduct or achievement which might be unconnected to the ownership of land. It had no legal definition and the idea of what constituted 'gentility,' that is, what qualities of behaviour or achievement were

²⁰ The Visitations made by Heralds between 1530 and 1688 remain useful in helping identify some of the leading families. The Visitation for Leicestershire in 1619 was published by the Harlean Society in 1870, together with the names of families whose name were added in the final Visitation of 1683.

²¹ Penelope Corfield, 'The Rivals: Landed and Other Gentlemen', in N. Harte and R. Quinault (eds.) , *Land and Society in Britain 1770-1914* (1996), pp. 1-31.

necessary in order to be considered a gentleman, was flexible from the early modern period.²² Broadly, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the term 'gentleman' denoted a leisured and cultivated individual, a man of sometimes conspicuous wealth and refinement, who was well educated, cultivated and virtuous and whose outlook and way of life merited the approbation of his social equals and betters. To be part of gentle, polite society meant being part of a political, social, cultural and economic elite which, led by the nobility, set the standards of taste and behaviour in every sphere of life, locally and nationally. At the turn of the century, however, in the climate of earnestness engendered by Evangelicalism and the French wars, moral virtue was becoming more a hallmark of the true gentleman than ostentatious display.²³ The 'landed' gentry, the pillars of rural society, were however mirrored by an urban variety, which was composed of a growing professional and middle class whose members did not possess country estates or large houses.²⁴ Their number had been increasing since the early modern period and, as the figures from the Leicestershire directory of 1849 illustrate, had swollen greatly by the nineteenth century. The subject of this thesis is the landed rather than the urban gentry, in a

²² Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p. 10.

²³ See Hilton, *England 1783-1846*, pp. 174-84; Porter, *English Society*, pp. 302-09.

²⁴ See F-J Ruggiu, 'The Urban Gentry in England 1660-1780', *Historical Research*, 74, (2001), pp. 249-70; Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 191-98; Alan Everitt, 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, 33, (1966), pp. 53-73 and Corfield, 'The Rivals'.

society in which, at the beginning of the period at least, land remained the key to wealth, status and power. To avoid confusion, the use of the terms 'aristocracy' and 'nobility' are confined to the peerage.²⁵ Nor can the gentry be described as an 'untitled' elite as they included baronets and knights, whose rank placed them left below the peers but distinguished from other commoners.

A number of variable criteria can be used to define the landed gentry, including rank, social status, style of life and wealth. The foundation of the gentry's standing in society was the possession of sufficient land to enable the 'gentleman' to lead a life of leisure on the income he derived from it. While it is possible, however, to determine the lower limits of what was necessary to lead a leisured life, there was no ceiling beyond which the richest landed commoner ceased to be a member of the gentry and became something else. In describing the 'space' occupied by the gentry, wealth is therefore only a partial criterion, but a fundamental one that draws a line below which the life of a gentleman was untenable.

Beyond land and a certain level of income, the landed gentry can be defined by how it used that wealth. One of the prime manifestations of

²⁵ Beckett, *Aristocracy in England*, and M. L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy* (Manchester, 1984), however, placed the gentry among the aristocracy.

gentry status, which is often cited as a defining feature of the landed gentry, is the ownership of a country seat – a house and an estate.²⁶ The house was an affirmation of wealth and taste, a symbol of status and authority in the locality and the living expression of a family's identity and its (intended) continuity over generations to come. The gentry can be further defined by its social and political role: as Knights of the Shire in parliament, justices, sheriffs, Deputy Lieutenants and as the holders of other offices of the crown and central government, such as commissioners for taxes. But not all those who were landed gentlemen contributed to the life of the county in these ways. Much of the discussion in Part Two will concern the gentry's engagement in political and administrative service, which was sometimes uneven. The assumption of such roles does not therefore define the gentry in the way that the possession of land and a seat do. It rather enables distinctions to be made between differing perceptions among the gentry of their role in society: between those who for reasons of duty or self-interest sought to use their position to influence and to govern, and those who opted to pursue more private lives, or were unable from whatever personal or dynastic cause to put forward members equipped or suitable for the exercise of authority.

²⁶ A house of a certain size (of more than 5,000 square feet of living space) was the level set by the Stones, in *An Open Elite?*

Thus, many of the features which characterised the gentry in later periods were evident in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: its foundations in wealth from land, its influence in local affairs, its separation in land and rank from the peerage, and its sense of identity and culture. It was already a “semi-open elite,” with high rates of failure among families who were replaced by newcomers from the ranks of the yeomen or from successful merchants, financiers, officials and professionals.²⁷ It is also apparent, from the range of recent studies of the medieval gentry, that within this general framework, the gentry had its own structure and gradations of status from an early date. These distinctions too lasted into the nineteenth century.

The Structure of the Gentry

The lines between the various levels of the gentry, distinguishing its wealthiest and most widely influential members at the top and the lesser, local squires whose horizons extended little further than one or two parishes in a single county, were not fixed. All members of the gentry shared certain common interests, as landowners, in public business and in society and culture. Each layer blurred into the one above or below. Nor were these lines static over time: a family could

²⁷ Carpenter, *Warwickshire*, p. 138.

from one generation to the next effectively rise or fall in the hierarchy, while a successful marriage or the prudent enlargement of estates might pave the way to a superior social position, and improvidence or dynastic failure could - and did - inflict hardship on the most ancient or seemingly well-established of families.

The categories used to describe the different levels of the gentry have mostly been based on degrees of influence or on the scale of their wealth. And since those with the greatest riches were likely to be the most powerful, they effectively represent different measures of much the same factors. The 'county' gentry, who often provided the shire's members of parliament, can be contrasted with the 'mere' or 'parochial' gentry, the less well-off squires whose sphere of influence was confined to the one or two villages where they had their house and land. In a hierarchy founded on wealth and land, the 'greater' gentry is distinct from the 'lesser' or 'minor' gentry in terms that are largely self-explanatory. While some writers have adopted a two-tier structure others have adopted three categories by introducing a middle tier between the manifestly richer 'greater' gentry and the 'lesser' levels.²⁸

²⁸ Bateman effectively followed a two-tier approach as did the Stones in *An Open Elite?*, and, with the qualification that reality does not always conform to theory, Rosenheim, *Ruling Order*.

One of the key determining factors in shaping the later structure of the landed gentry was the creation in 1611 of the baronetage. The baronets, who were in effect a class of superior, hereditary knights, were expected to enjoy a substantial income from land, higher than the average squire. They came to occupy the top stratum of the gentry and remained at its peak throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But the territory was not exclusively or automatically theirs: some untitled landowners were richer than some baronets and had comparable influence. Below them stood a middle tier with less extensive holdings but who could lay equal claim to chair the bench of county magistrates at the Quarter Sessions, or stand for parliament or be 'pricked' as a High Sheriff. And finally came the lesser or parochial gentry, who would by the beginning of the nineteenth century expect to perform their duty as magistrates and officers in the yeomanry or militia as modest subscribers and supporters of all manner of worthy causes for the relief of the poor and ill. By this time, all levels of the gentry could play a role in certain areas of county affairs, if they so chose. The descriptions of 'county' and 'parochial' gentry as indicators of degrees of influence are not therefore as helpful in this period as they might have been, for example, in the discussion of the seventeenth century.

This thesis will therefore mark out three tiers within the gentry, based on their land and wealth: the greater, middling and lesser gentry. The latter category however has been further subdivided to include two distinctive sub-categories: first, a 'fringe' gentry, who owned less than 1,000 acres, but earned £1,000 a year from it and were thus able to support the basic essentials of a modest country house and estate, and play a part in county business; and secondly, a sub-gentry grouping, whose landed income was below that level but who had some pretensions to the gentry lifestyle. In the second half of the period especially, these distinctions are not so much a complication as a useful analytical tool in considering the definition and structure of the gentry as a whole, which was becoming increasingly diffuse with widely-ranging levels of wealth .

The question of the wealth of the gentry is central to its study. How much land they owned, how much money it generated, and what they did with it, defined their identity and status. Before the 1873 *Return of Owners of Land* there were no authoritative figures for the distribution of land in England, or how many people made up the gentry as a whole, how much of the land they owned and how much income they derived from it. From contemporary surveys such as those by King or Colquhoun, combined with the results of modern research, it is clear

that an income of £300 might suffice for a member of the 'lesser' gentry at the beginning of the eighteenth century, with twice that amount for someone who wanted to represent the shire in parliament, and five figure sums for the wealthiest peers. By the closing decades of the century, lesser gentry would expect to have up to £1,000, and a baronet an income of around £2,000, with the wealthiest gentry up to £5,000 and peers from £10-50,000.²⁹ For the greater part of the nineteenth century, an annual income of £1,000, or close to it, was necessary to support the lifestyle of a country gentleman.³⁰ Someone with this amount of money but under £2,000 a year can be considered as a member of the 'lesser' gentry. Between £2-3,000, that is more than double the amount available to the least of the gentry, occupies the 'middling' ground. Above them, were the greater gentry with those who earned £3,000 a year or more (with no upper limit, though in practice rarely more than £10,000). At the end of the period, Bateman set the lower limit for 'squires' at £1,000 a year and for what he called 'Great Landowners' at £3,000 from a minimum of 3,000 acres. In 1867, these figures placed landowners in an upper class of just under 30,000 people who enjoyed incomes of above £1,000 a year. A middle class of under

²⁹ Based on figures in G. E. Mingay, *Land and Society in England 1750-1980* (1994), and Beckett, *Aristocracy*.

³⁰ Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 112; Mingay, *Gentry*, p. 14.

1.5% of the population had £300 to a £1,000 annually; some 85% was earning less than £100 a year.³¹

In his 1883 edition, Bateman found that 400 peers and peeresses and their eldest sons, 17.4% of the total land, excluding waste, and that 3,817 commoners - the 'great landowners' and 'squires' - owned a further 38.9%. The latter category, which in effect describes the gentry, is considerably lower than the figures accepted by many historians of between 12,00 and 15,000 families.³² However, below the 'squires,' Bateman identified 9,585 'Greater Yeomen', who owned 4.783 million acres in holdings of between 300 and 1,000 acres each. Some of these were effectively members of the gentry. The achievement of gentry status with less than 1,000 acres had been possible at various times. Langford has said that in the early eighteenth century moderate sized counties like Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Derbyshire probably had 150 estates that could support an annual income of £300, in other words slightly above King's figure for a gentleman.³³ For the nineteenth century, Beckett accepted that those with between 1,000 and 3,000 acres constituted the 'squirearchy' but considers that Bateman's 'greater yeomen' were "in effect the gentry, men substantial

³¹ See K. T. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-86* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 44-47, 63; Perkin, *Origins*, p. 420, and Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (1985 edition), pp. 102-3 for income and taxation levels.

³² Beckett, Thompson and Mingay, for example.

³³ Langford, *Propertied Englishman*, p. 289.

enough to be living from their landed income, but in a rather different league from the greater owners of land."³⁴ Daunton has echoed this view, arguing that in the nineteenth century it was possible to aspire to gentry status with 300-1,000 acres, if there was a supplementary non-landed income.³⁵ It will be argued here that some of those at the upper levels of this band, who derived £1,000 or more income per annum from less than 1,000 acres, and a few who might have somewhat lower incomes, were in essence part of the gentry, and are described as members of the 'fringe gentry'.

The distinctions in status and wealth between different levels of the gentry have played an important part in some recent debates on the nature and composition of the gentry. A more traditional standpoint is represented by Thompson, who has argued that "it has long been recognized that the rise of new gentry is a permanent feature of the English social scene."³⁶ His stance is shared by Harold Perkin, who wrote of the "familiar rise of new men into the gentry and nobility which became the most distinctive features of English history," and of familiar paths "open for merchants and industrialists."³⁷ This view was challenged by the Stones in *An Open Elite?*, which concluded that the

³⁴ Beckett, *Aristocracy in England*, p. 5.

³⁵ M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty – an Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995), p. 61.

³⁶ Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 121.

³⁷ Perkin, *English Society*, pp. 57-9. Evans shared this view, (*Modern State*, p. 8).

"the traditional concept of an open elite – open to large scale infiltration by merchant wealth – is dead."³⁸ The Stones found that over the 340 year period from 1540-1880, only 157 businessmen bought their way into the elite in the three counties they studied, amounting to only 7% of all 2,246 owners of some 362 houses and a third of 480 purchasers. This compared with 142 office holders and lawyers (6.3% of all owners and 30% of purchasers).³⁹ The Stones' interpretation reinforced the earlier work of Habakkuk, and Beckett and Porter, who argued that while the landowning elite was not in any formal sense 'closed' to outsiders from business or industry, it was difficult to break into, and has been echoed by Cannon's study of the eighteenth century peerage.⁴⁰ From a different approach, Rubinstein maintained that nineteenth century businessmen did not invest greatly in land because they could obtain higher returns on other investments or because they did not wish to ape the landed aristocracy.⁴¹ Instead, the Stones drew a picture of "elite stability", which was made possible by a number of psychological and cultural factors and embodied in English law: the absence of legal privileges, cultural cohesion with professionals and 'middling sorts,' who sought to imitate rather than undermine their

³⁸ Stone *An Open Elite?* P. 284 (2001).

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 283 (2001).

⁴⁰ Habakkuk, *English Land Ownership*; 'The Rise and Fall of English Landed Families 1660-1800', *TRHS*, 29-31 (1979-81); Beckett, *Aristocracy in England*, Porter, *English Society*, and Canon, *Peerage*.

⁴¹ W. D. Rubinstein, *Men of Property* (1981).

social superiors, a sense of paternalistic duty which governed the elite's relations with its social inferiors, familiarity with and accommodation to the interests of government, the professions and commerce and its own successful family strategies across the generations.⁴² They were concerned however with "those members of the aristocracy, baronetage, knightage and squirearchy whose main territorial base took the form of at least one large country house and a substantial landed estate." The less wealthy, less well educated 'parish gentry', whose interests and powers were limited to one or two villages, were effectively excluded from their research.

While the historiographical importance of the Stones' research was widely recognised, their methods, which restricted their focus to the richest landowners, as well as their conclusions, attracted much critical comment. Thompson and David and Eileen Spring, among others, argued that the elite was essentially open to newcomers and that nineteenth-century businessmen – or their immediate heirs - did invest in land.⁴³ Cannadine portrayed a Victorian elite which was "much more new than old", reinforced at the end of the eighteenth century not just

⁴² Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 209-421 (2001).

⁴³ Eileen & David Spring, 'The English Landed Elite 1540-1879', *Albion*, 17, (1985), pp. 149-166; F. M. L. Thompson, *Landowners, capitalists and entrepreneurs*, (Oxford, 1994) and 'Desirable Properties: The Town and Country connection', *Historical Research*, no 64 (1990), pp. 156-71; E. A. Wasson, 'The penetration of new wealth into the English governing class from the middle ages to the First World War', *EconHR*, LI, (1998), pp. 25-48; The Stones' choice of house size and their selection of counties (Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Northumberland) have also been criticised.

by an influx of Scots and Irish families to form a British elite but by “self-made merchants, nabobs and industrialists”, as well as public servants who bought their way in and gradually established themselves as bone-fide landowners.⁴⁴ Others have maintained that while only a minority of new men bought estates, the elite was from being a closed and rigid ‘caste,’ and that the possibility of mobility contributed to social cohesion.⁴⁵ Many of the questions raised in this debate will be discussed in the following chapters in relation to Leicestershire.

Here, the definition of the ‘gentry’ in its totality embraces the lesser, ‘parish’ squire as well as the knights, baronets and magnates on whom the Stones focused their attention. It is a somewhat broader and looser group, the history of which is more fluid and less neat; its fringe stands at a boundary edge of the landed classes between the old wealth of the aristocracy and the new money of the rising middle classes. While newcomers rarely leapt to the highest levels of landed society in one generation, the example of Leicestershire in the period under study here illustrates that the middling and lesser ranks of the gentry were subject to numerous and frequent changes of personnel.

⁴⁴ Cannadine: ‘*The Making of the British Upper Classes*’ in *Aspects of Aristocracy*, pp. 34-5.

⁴⁵ More recently, Habakkuk, *Estates System*; also Tom Nicholas, ‘Businessmen and landowning in the late nineteenth century’, *EconHR*, 52, (1999), pp. 27-44 and David Brown, ‘Equipose and the myth of an open elite: new men of wealth and the purchase of land in the equipose decades, 1850-69’ in Martin Hewitt, (ed). *An age of equipose? reassessing mid-Victorian Britain* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 123-155.

3. The Foundations of the Leicestershire Gentry

The twin themes of continuity and change figure prominently in any study of the gentry.¹ Some historians have emphasised the primacy of one over the other. Joan Thirsk has written of the “social immobility” of Leicestershire’s major landowners in the hundred years up to 1760 and of the “unshakeably rooted” position of the majority of its great landed families over the following century.² While she conceded that it “would be easy to exaggerate” this lack of movement because of the contrast with the fluidity of the period beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, she described a fundamentally unchanging scene in which a small number of mainly long-established families – eight each from the peerage and the gentry - had accumulated land at the expense of smaller owners and to the exclusion of newcomers. This position was underlined by Hunt, writing about the effects of parliamentary enclosure in Leicestershire. He concluded that following enclosure, which was at its most intense in the county between 1760 and 1780, there had been a steady movement of land towards its larger landowners.³ These studies followed the earlier work of Habakkuk, who held that there had

¹ John Rule, however, argued that “‘continuity versus change’ has become a trite and overworked dichotomy in recent approaches to the eighteenth century.” (*The Vital Century – England’s Developing Economy 1714-1815* (1992), p. 311).

² ‘Agricultural History 1540-1950’, *VCH*, 2, (1954), p. 240, 226.

³ Hunt’s arguments are summarised in ‘The Chronology of Parliamentary Enclosure in Leicestershire’ *EconHR*, 10 (1957-58) pp. 265-272, and ‘Landownership and Enclosure 1750-1830’, *EconHR*, 11 (1958-59) pp. 497-505.

been a drift in landownership from the end of the seventeenth century in favour of large estate holders, and anticipated the Stones' *An Open Elite?* and the debate previously mentioned.

This and the following chapter will consider many of these questions of mobility and wealth. They will look at the structure and the gradations of the gentry and will identify its members and discuss the nature of the changes in its composition over the period. While a small core of families maintained a presence in the county from the medieval period to the Victorian age, its composition in Leicestershire was subject to continual change, most noticeably at the middling and lower levels. In the first half of the period, a few newcomers were able to acquire one of the small to medium-sized estates which frequently changed hands, to set themselves up as country gentlemen. In the Victorian period however the numbers at the lower levels expanded rapidly, although few large estates found their way onto the open market. Leading families found various ways of keeping their estates intact and within the wider family. In the event of the failure of the male line, for example, land passed to daughters or other more distant relatives, who sometimes changed their names to inherit their new property, so that the appearance of continuity was maintained while new blood came into the county. The weakness at times of the greater gentry provided

further opportunities for members of the middling and an expanding lesser gentry to assume a prominent role in county life. The overall accumulated effect of these developments was not simply a change in personnel but in the character of the gentry. The gentry as it existed at the beginning of the period was however the product of four hundred years' evolution. An understanding of its make-up and standing in Leicestershire at the close of the eighteenth century requires therefore some brief comment on the pattern of landownership in the context of the economy of the county and the midland region.

Landownership and the Economy

When, one Saturday in April 1830, William Cobbett approached Melton Mowbray from Lincolnshire, he observed "the beautiful pastures of this verdant little county of Leicester."⁴ Leicestershire had long been noted for its rolling landscape, its sheep and cattle and prosperous graziers, and specialties such as its beans and cheese production.⁵ By 1854, some 59% of the county was given over to grass, the result of a long process of the conversion of land from arable to pasture, which was

⁴ Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (1853 edition), p. 607

⁵ G. E. Mingay, in Joan Thirsk (ed.) *The Agricultural History of England*, 7, pp. 94-9; Thirsk, *VCH*, 2, p. 233; Roy Millward, *A History of Leicestershire and Rutland*, pp. 70-74; William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Leicestershire* (Sheffield, 1863) p. 60.

more suited to its heavy clay soil, and intensified by enclosure in the early modern period and by statute from the mid-eighteenth century.⁶

This however was only a part of the picture. Leicestershire was also a county of contrasts. The River Soar and its valley divided it between the heavier soils of the west and the more amenable eastern pastures. Beyond the rocky outcrops of the north west were found the county's coal fields, which had been mined since the medieval period.⁷ Across the rest of the county the rural economy consisted mainly of domestic industries based on framework knitting in many of its smaller towns and villages, with its flourishing agricultural sector pre-eminent in, but not confined to, the south and east, where the population was at its least dense. At the centre of the county, like the hub of wheel, stood the county town of Leicester, at the close of the eighteenth century on the threshold of a rapid expansion that saw its population grow from 17,000 people in 1800 to 95,000 in 1871.⁸ The borough sucked in people and produce from surrounding villages and came to dominate the county economically with its hosiery, and later footwear and light engineering industries. By 1850 less than half the population lived in rural areas and

⁶ J. Philip Dod, 'The Agriculture of Leicestershire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: a Study of the 1854 Crop Returns', in David Williams (ed.) *The Adaptation of Change*, pp. 115-35; Thirsk, VCH; Hunt, 'Landownership'.

⁷ Millward, *Leicestershire*, pp. 81-5.

⁸ In 1801, the population of the borough of Leicester was 16,953. By 1831 it had risen to 39,904, to 48,167 in 1841, 60,584 in 1851 and 95,220 by 1871. The figures for the county were: 130,081 in 1801; 197,003 in 1831; 215,867 in 1841; 230,308 in 1851 and 269,321 in 1871 (VCH, 3, 1955, p. 179).

the number of agricultural workers adult was fewer than the total of male framework knitters.⁹ Economic diversity, in light, small-scale industries which existed alongside a rich farming sector, remained the defining characteristic of Leicestershire.

The county's variety provided many points of contrast with its neighbours, which gave the county its own identity. It cannot be said that during this period Leicestershire formed with any of its neighbours a distinct social, economic or geographic region.¹⁰ The borough, for example, while the fourth or fifth largest town of the midlands, was dwarfed by Birmingham's mid-century population of more than a quarter of a million, was smaller than some of the mushrooming towns of the Staffordshire Potteries, and its mining was on a lesser scale than that of

⁹ David Thompson, *The Churches and Society in Leicestershire 1851-1881*, Cambridge University, PhD (1969) pp. 19-21.

¹⁰ In a recent thesis, Claire Townsend argued that the East Midlands, and its towns of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, have been perceived as lacking in any clear geographic or economic integration (*Town, Country and Region: Spatial Integration in the East Midlands 1700-1830*, University of Leicester, PhD thesis (2006)). Brewer has also argued that regionalism and particularism were weak in England (*The Sinews of Power – War, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (1989), p. 3). However, in his survey, *The Rural Economy of Midlands Counties (1790)*, William Marshall described a "Midlands District", with Leicester at its centre and consisting of Warwickshire, Rutland, north Northamptonshire, southern Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and east Staffordshire. Charles Pythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship* (Leicester 1983) divided England into 14 cultural provinces based principally river basins. Leicestershire formed part of the Trent region with Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire. Following his work, Alan Fox, *A Lost Frontier Revealed: Regional Separation in the East Midlands* (Hatfield, 2009), has drawn attention to the distinctions in landscape, society and culture, on the borders of Leicestershire and Lincolnshire which lay between two of these regions.

Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire.¹¹ Its neighbours to the south and east were less industrially developed and were in their turn they were very different areas: Rutland was the smallest county in England, while Lincolnshire was more than three times larger than Leicestershire, with a highly varied topography and a coastal dimension. Lincolnshire's land was less rich: exactly half of 80 of its gentry landowners earned less than £1 10s per acre from their land, compared with just under one in ten of the Leicestershire.¹² All parts of Leicestershire were capable was producing rental of £2 an acre by the end of the period, except the north east of the county, in its least populated area, the Hundred of Framland beyond Melton Mowbray where there were no major gentry estates.¹³ The north east's main landowner was the Duke of the Rutland, whose 30,109 acres in Leicestershire in 1873 generated an income of £42,307, a rate £1 8s an acre, which was low for the county as a whole.¹⁴ In all of its seven neighbours, a higher proportion of the

¹¹ In 1830, Leicestershire produced 275,000 tons of coal compared with 1,425,00 in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and 4,200,000 in Staffordshire (M. W. Flinn, *The History of the British Coal Industry, 4 1700-1830* (Oxford, 1984) pp. 26-7). By 1871, Leicestershire was producing 700,000 tons (VCH, 3, p. 41).

¹² Derived from analysis of individual listings in Bateman.

¹³ Some 18,724 people lived in its 87,540 acres in 1841 (White, *Gazetteer* (1846) p. 23). The county consisted of six ancient Hundreds: Framland, in which Melton Mowbray was situated; East Goscote to the north and east of Leicester; West Goscote, in the north west, which contained Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Loughborough and had a population of 48,875 in an area of 86,580 acres; Sparkenhoe to the west, with Hinckley and Market Bosworth; Guthlaxton in the south, with Lutterworth; and Gartree, which covered its second least densely populated area, in the south and east of the county, with Market Harborough as its main market town. The Hundreds were still used for some administrative purposes such as sub-divisions for the magistracy and constabulary.

¹⁴ ROL

land was owned by peers and great landowners than was the case in Leicestershire, a dominance that was reflected in Rutland, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire, for example, political as much as its economic affairs.¹⁵

From an early date, landownership in Leicestershire has been characterised by the persistence of the smaller landowner rather than the supremacy of the magnate. Hoskins suggested that the roots of such a structure, resting on a class of free peasant landholders without a resident lord of the manor, may lie in the Viking period.¹⁶ Thirsk wrote that throughout its history the county had been notable for its small to middling landowners, and contained a larger number of yeomen than most English counties.¹⁷ Hilton, in his study of Leicestershire estates in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, maintained that few landowners possessed more than four or five demesne manors and the most important landowners were a class of "thriving middling gentry."¹⁸ Acheson also noted that in the fifteenth century, while some members of the nobility had major landholdings in Leicestershire, there was no pre-eminent magnate and the gentry pursued its own path.¹⁹

¹⁵ Based on the Tables in Bateman, pp. 503-10; see chapter 7.

¹⁶ W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant* (1957) p. xiii.

¹⁷ Thirsk, *VCH*, p. 207.

¹⁸ R. H. Hilton, *The Economic Development of some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1947) p. 4.

¹⁹ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, pp. 16, 202.

The enduring effects of this legacy can be seen in later periods, even as the proportion of land held by peers and the gentry increased. Thirsk estimated that by the second half of the sixteenth century, 15% of former monastic land in Leicestershire was owned by the gentry while 29% had been sold to peers.²⁰ However, the county's small landowning class remained remarkably persistent and owner-occupied farms accounted for 47% of the land even at the end of the eighteenth century.²¹ Mills' study of landownership in Leicestershire in the nineteenth century showed that more than half the villages and townships in the county could be considered as 'open' rather than 'closed', and were inhabited by large, dense populations with many small proprietors and rural industries and craftsmen, and without a dominant landlord.²² The acquisition of more land by the aristocracy and wealthy squires in parishes which had recently been enclosed ran in parallel to the survival of the small landowner and the growth of the 'open' townships. In the Victorian era however there was a distinct change of emphasis. Rising prices and an active land market in smaller estates resulted in a shift away from the 'yeoman' farmer. By the end

²⁰ Thirsk, *VCH*, p. 209.

²¹ See Stephen Joyce, 'Enclosure and landholding in the Soar Valley', *TLAHS*, 73, (1999), pp. 34-44.

²² D. Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century Britain* (1980), pp. 76-7. 174 (56.5%) out of 308 townships in Leicestershire were 'open' and 134 (43.5%) were 'closed'; see also B. A. Holderness, "'Open' and 'Close' Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", *Agricultural History Review*, 20 (1972), pp. 126-39.

of the period, peers and their families owned 24.4% of Leicestershire, and the gentry, with more than 1,000 acres each, held 24.6%.²³ At that point, as an age of high land values came to end, the gentry's advance halted and as Reeder noted in his survey of Leicestershire landowners and holdings in the late nineteenth century, Leicestershire estates appear to have fragmented rather than consolidated.²⁴

The largest landowners among both the nobility and the gentry were found mainly in areas to the north of Leicester. There were historic reasons for this. The relatively wilder areas such as Charnwood Forest and beyond, further away from the borough, were favoured in the medieval period for both fortified noble residences and religious houses. The seat of the Dukes of Rutland remained at Belvoir in the extreme north east of the county, with the Earl Ferrers at Staunton Harold, the Earl of Harborough at Stapleford and the Marquis of Hastings at Donington, in the north west, while ruins remain to this day of Ashby Castle and Bradgate House in the north and Kirby Muxloe Castle, to the west of the borough. Of the county's twelve medieval abbeys or priories, just under half of whose lands were allocated to the nobility and gentry, only two, at Launde and Bradley, were situated to the south

²³ See the following chapter.

²⁴ This was in contrast to Rutland, where aristocratic owners consolidated their estates at the expense of the gentry (D. Reeder, *Landowners and Landholding in Leicestershire and Rutland 1873-1911* (Leicester, 1994) p. 3).

or east of the borough. Such factors helped determine the distribution of the gentry's land even at the opening of the period under study. In 1790, 36 of 66 gentry families had their main estates in the north of the county. By 1873, eight of the 11 largest gentry landowners were centred in the north of the county, five of them to the north west of the borough. By contrast, more of the middling, and the expanding lesser gentry – some 23 out of 44 landowners - were located in the south as farms and smaller estates frequently changed owners in a property market fuelled by demand from businessmen and professionals seeking a first, and modest, country estate.²⁵

Thus, the pattern of landowning in Leicestershire was highly variegated. No one category dominated the economy, or the politics, of the county. However, any analysis of landownership before 1873 must be heavily qualified and draw on a range of sources, contemporary and modern.

The Pattern of Change among the Gentry

In the course of its evolution from a feudal military class to the leisured elite of the late eighteenth century, the gentry underwent continual changes in composition, while retaining some of its essential

²⁵ See Appendix I for maps showing the location of some of the main gentry estates.

characteristics. In order to understand the structure and identity of the gentry at the opening of the period, it is necessary to outline something of the dynamics of its earlier history.

Like its mid-Victorian counterpart, the Leicestershire gentry of the medieval period was numerically small, highly structured, and noted for the middling landowners who were becoming distinct, economically, socially and politically, from the peerage. Astill based his study of the second half of the fourteenth century on 40 knightly and potentially knightly families and 21 non-knightly ones.²⁶ Acheson's work on the 'gentry community' in the fifteenth century listed the names of 89 knights, distrainees, esquires and gentlemen and a further 84 individuals classified as 'sub-gentry'.²⁷ An indication of the rate of turnover is provided by the lists of names in the three Heraldic Visitations carried out in Leicestershire between 1563 and 1682, which provided a guide to the county's leading families in the nobility and most of those who might be considered as part of the gentry. In a Visitation of 1563, 14 of Acheson's gentry families appear in the 23 names listed. A more extensive Visitation conducted in 1619 set out the pedigrees of 216 branches of 187 families.²⁸ The names of 29 of Acheson's 89 top families appeared in this Visitation, including four who had been raised

²⁶ Astill, *Medieval Gentry*, p. 17.

²⁷ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, Appendix I, pp. 204-12.

²⁸ John Fetherston (ed.) *Visitation of Leicestershire 1619* (1870).

to the peerage. Thus, the descendants of just under one third of the gentry families of the late 15th century (32.6%) were among the foremost families in the county in the early seventeenth century. All but one of the 23 names listed in the Visitation of 1563 appeared in the list of 1619.²⁹

The early modern period saw significant transfers of land following dissolution, with merchants and lawyers from London in particular acquiring property in the county. Several families who entered the gentry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries remained landowners into the mid-nineteenth century. These included the Cave, Dixie, Herrick and Babington families. The mid-seventeenth century was another period of rapid change, which saw losers as well as winners. Several Royalist families never recovered from the penalties suffered during the Interregnum.³⁰ Newcomers took their place, such as James Winstanley, a Lancashire lawyer and the Recorder of Leicester in 1653, who bought Braunstone from Fardinando Hastings in 1650,³¹ and a London merchant, Christopher Packe, who was knighted by Cromwell, and purchased Prestwold from the Skipwiths.³² After the Restoration,

²⁹ The names from 1563 are listed in the *Visitation of 1619*, p. vii.

³⁰ These included the Turpin, Staesmore, Pretymen and Skipwith families. Thirsk, *VCH*, p. 215-6.

³¹ *White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Sheffield, 1846).

³² Nichols, 3, part 1, p. 354-5.

Sir Nathan Wrighte, a former Recorder of Leicester and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal from 1700-06, bought estates at Brooksby and Broughton Astley, Ambrose Phillipps, a London lawyer, bought Garendon Park in 1683 and Richard Cheslyn, an iron founder also from London, purchased Langley Priory in 1686.³³ There was also upward mobility from the gentry into the nobility: Edward Noel was ennobled in 1617, followed by William Sherard in 1627, Thomas Brudenell in 1628 and William Ponsonby in 1721.³⁴

Modern research has thrown more light on the degree of change during this period. Fleming identified the origins and allegiances of 83 landed families in Leicestershire during the Civil War. He found that 26 of these families (31.5%) arrived in the county in the late sixteenth century or later; 21 (25%) entered it in the early to mid-sixteenth century and 36 (43.5%) were "indigenous", having lived in the county from the fifteenth century or earlier.³⁵ In his study of Leicestershire politics between 1677 and 1716, Paterson found that 26 out of 87 families named in the Commission of Peace from 1680-1719, and whose origins were traced, lived in Leicestershire before 1600, 16 (18.4%) from the fifteenth

³³ For Wrighte, see Nichols, 3, part 1, pp. 194, 216-17 and Leonard Cantor, *The Historic Country Houses of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicester, 1998); for Phillipps: Nichols, 3, part 2, p. 803; Margaret Pawley, *Faith and Family – The Life and Circle of Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle* (Norwich, 1993), p. 1; Mark Girouard, 'Ambrose Phillipps of Garendon', *Architectural History*, 8 (1965) p. 25-38; and for Cheslyn: Nichols, 3, part 2, p. 863.

³⁴ BPB, various.

³⁵ David Fleming, 'Faction and Civil War in Leicester', *TLAHS*, 57 (1981-82) pp. 26-36.

century and nine (10.3%) from the sixteenth.³⁶ Both Fleming and Paterson calculated the length of time a family had lived in the county from the earliest known date of residence rather than their entry into the gentry: a number of families, including those of Pochin, Hartopp, Skeffington and Cave, lived in Leicestershire for some generations as yeomen or minor landowners before they rose to the gentry.³⁷

The mid to late eighteenth century was a period of continual change in the composition of the Leicestershire gentry. Major political upheavals were less significant in bringing about changes however than failures in family lines and transfers from one branch of a family to another.³⁸ Families maintained the appearance of continuity through sometimes complex inheritance arrangements. Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp (1749-1833), who was born Edmund Bunney, the son of a hosier turned banker and minor landowner, inherited property from his mother-in-law, who was married to the former Governor of Bencoolen and a Director of the East India Company, and from his maternal uncle, Joseph Cradock.

³⁶ Neil Paterson, *Leicestershire Politics c 1677 – c 1716*, University of Nottingham, PhD thesis (2008) p. 105. I am grateful to Professor John Beckett for drawing my attention to this thesis.

³⁷ W. G. Hoskins, 'Leicestershire Yeoman Families and their pedigrees', *TLAHS*, 23 (1947), 30-62.

³⁸ The demographic crisis between 1650 and 1740 saw the demise of many landed families. See H. J. Habakkuk, 'The Rise and Fall of English Landed Families 1600-1800', *TRHS*, 29 (1979), pp. 183-207; Rosenheim, *Ruling Order*, p. 13-20; Stone & Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 63-5.

He was created a baronet and served as a county MP from 1798-1806.³⁹ His cousin, Edward Hartopp (1758-1808), changed his name to Hartopp Wigley, under the terms of the will of his great uncle, James Wigley MP who owned Scraftoft Hall to the east of Leicester, and he inherited estate at Potters Marston in the south west of the county which belonged to his wife's father, Thomas Boothby (1692-1775).⁴⁰ Between 1753 and 1777, the Reverend Thomas Frewen (1708-91) inherited from various branches of his family property in Sussex, Leicestershire and Yorkshire, to lay the foundations for the rise of one of Leicestershire's major landowning families in the nineteenth century.⁴¹

Other families survived the lack of a direct male heir with a change of name by a son-in-law, or succession through the female line or more distant relative. The Nevill inheritance had passed through the female line when Cosmas Nevill (1726-63), the son of Count Cosmas Migliorucci and Mary Nevill, adopted his mother's maiden name and succeeded to the estate at Holt. In 1762, Richard Smith left Enderby Hall to his nephew, Charles, the second son of Sir Charles Lorraine Bt, who then

³⁹ See chapters 6 & 7.

⁴⁰ C. Billson, *Memoirs of Leicester* (Leicester, 1924), p. 17; George Farnham, 'Potters Marston: Some notes on the manor', *TLAHS*, 12 (1921-22) pp. 169-79; Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Report on the estate papers of the Hartopp Family of Dalby Hall, Leicester* (1976); BPB & BLG (various); Fletcher, p. 89; *VCH*, 4, p. 443; aspects of the Hartopps' careers will be examined in Part Two.

⁴¹ Nichols, 2, p. 139 and 4 part 2, p. 895. Frewen took on the additional name of Turner but in 1837, his grandson, Thomas, reverted to the use of Frewen alone.

became Charles Lorraine Smith.⁴² In 1770, the Rev. Andrew Burnaby (1732-1812) inherited Baggrave Hall and a portion of the Manor of Evington through his marriage to Anna Edwyn, the daughter of John Edwyn, the previous owner of the Hall and the High Sheriff of Leicestershire in 1754.⁴³ Burnaby, the son of the Vicar of St Margaret's Church in Leicester, was the Vicar of Greenwich, and Archdeacon of Leicester from 1786 until his death, and travelled in Europe and North America. In the nineteenth century, Baggrave Hall, to the north east of Leicester, became the family's Leicestershire seat and they became actively engaged as magistrates, churchmen, soldiers and lawyers, with marriage connections to numerous aristocratic and gentry families in the county and beyond. In 1772, William Farrell, an officer in the Grenadier Guards, who had married Elizabeth Skeffington, the sister and co-heir of Thomas Skeffington, changed his name to Farrell-Skeffington and took possession of Skeffington Hall.⁴⁴ On his death in 1777, Samuel Phillipps' estates at Garendon passed first to his wife and then to his cousin, Thomas March, who added Phillipps to his own name.

Some new money from business or the professions was invested in land during the decades prior to 1790. John Darker, the Leicestershire-born

⁴² Nichols, 4, part 1 p. 158.

⁴³ *ODNB*, 8, pp. 885-6, for Burnaby; W. Pemberton, 'The Parochial Inspections of Andrew Burnaby DD, Archdeacon of Leicester in the years 1794-97', *TLAHS*, 63 (1989) pp. 48-70.

⁴⁴ Nichols, 3, part 1, p. 438-40.

borough MP, joined his father's business as a hop merchant in London, before "acquiring considerable property in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire."⁴⁵ On his death in 1784, his daughter, Elizabeth, who was married to another MP, Edward Loveden, inherited his estates which totalled more than 1,000 acres, mainly in the north of the county.⁴⁶ John Simpson, the son of the Recorder of Leicester, purchased Launde Abbey for £10,000 in 1763.⁴⁷ The Dicey family, London printers and owners of the *Northampton Mercury* newspaper, bought Claybrooke Hall, in the south west of the county.⁴⁸ In 1781, an attorney, Holled Smith, acquired nearly 1,000 acres nearby at Normanton Turville and Ashby Parva.⁴⁹ One of the first country houses to have been built with the proceeds of an industrial fortune was Gopsall Park on the western edge of the county. Described by Throsby as "a magnificent seat,"⁵⁰ it passed in 1763 from Charles Jennens, the son of the Birmingham ironmaster, Humphrey Jennens, and a friend and patron of Handel, to his son-in-law, Penn Assheton Curzon, together with land in five other villages in Leicestershire and in four neighbouring counties. Curzon was a county member for Leicestershire from 1792 until his death in 1797. His son later became a peer and what had been the seat of 'new' gentry

⁴⁵ Darker was an MP from 1766-68 and from 1774-84 (Namier & Brooke, III, pp. 299-300).

⁴⁶ ROLLR QS/62, *Land Tax Assessments*; for Loveden, see Thorne, 4, pp. 457-8.

⁴⁷ Throsby, 1, p. 289; Nichols, Part 1, p. 326.

⁴⁸ *ODNB*, 16, pp. 42-3.

⁴⁹ Nichols, 4, Part 2, p. 1002.

⁵⁰ Throsby, 1, p. 280.

in the eighteenth century became in the nineteenth the home of a nationally influential aristocratic family, and the third largest landowner in Leicestershire.⁵¹

It is possible, however, from a number of contemporary sources, to identify the members of the gentry at the opening of the period, and determine when they entered landed society. These include Land Tax assessments, which from 1780 were gathered in manuscript lists by parish, and contained the names of the owners and occupiers of land and the amount of tax to be paid, Enclosure Acts and Awards, and the works of Nichols and Throsby and later reference works. None is free from difficulty.

Many published sources were influenced by a fascination with the medieval origins of the nobility and gentry.⁵² Nichols' *History* contained the pedigrees of some 457 Leicestershire families, many purportedly stretching back to the medieval period (including the lines of 49 of 89 medieval gentry families identified by Acheson). Later, the works of Burke, Debrett and others, including single volumes of more local interest, such as Fletcher's late Victorian *Leicestershire Pedigrees and*

⁵¹ See the following section.

⁵² See Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries. The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth Century Britain* (2004) and Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot – Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (1981).

Royal Descents, were all intended to illustrate the continuity of the English landed elite. They are, however, sometimes unreliable in tracing the genealogies of old families and they have been sparingly used here as a source for detailed information on the ancestry of gentry families before the eighteenth century. Nichols' accounts of changes in manorial holdings and landownership by parish however do provide much useful information. Together with other sources and more recent research it is possible to make some assessment of the rate of change leading up to the close of the eighteenth century.⁵³

Land Tax assessments present many problems and historians are divided over the reliability and usefulness, particularly when used to calculate the amount of land owned and its rental value, a problem, however, which is greater for the study of smaller landowners.⁵⁴ The tax, which was introduced in 1697, was also levied on buildings and used as a more general tax on personal wealth and goods. Some of

⁵³ For example, Gorge Farnham, *Leicestershire Medieval Pedigrees* (1925), which set out to correct some of Nichols' errors. Articles in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society* and the *Victoria County History* have extended and revised the knowledge of ancient Leicestershire families and estate ownership.

⁵⁴ See W. R. Ward, *The English Land Tax in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1953); M. Turner & D. Mills (eds.), *Land and Property: The English Land Tax 1692-1832* (Gloucester, 1986); G. E. Mingay, 'The Land Tax Assessment and the smaller Landowner', *EconHR*, 17 (1964), pp. 381-88; J. M. Martin, 'Landownership and the Land Tax Returns', *Agricultural History Review*, 14 (1966), pp. 96-103; L. Soltow, 'The Distribution of Property Values in England and Wales in 1798', *EconHR*, 34 (1981), pp. 60-70; D. E. Ginter, 'A Wealth of Problems with the Land Tax', *EconHR*, 35 (1982), pp. 416-21; L. Soltow, 'The Land Tax Redemption Records 1798-1963', *EconHR*, 35 (1982), pp. 427-33; Langford, *Propertied Englishman*, p. 339-47.

these difficulties have been avoided here because the records have been used to identify the names of the leading rather than the lesser landowners and, while some attempt has been made to assess how much land they owned, they have not been used to try to calculate with any expectation of precision the exact number of acres held by any one individual.

Some earlier work has been carried out using the Land Tax records for Leicestershire. Thirsk found that in 1780, 16 Leicestershire landowners paid more than £200 in Land Tax and another 57 paid sums of between £50 and £200. These 73 individuals, who included peers and members of the gentry, accounted for 21% of the total amount of tax paid in the county, with another 19% coming from 700 people in the yeoman class who paid £7 and over.⁵⁵ Hunt calculated that in a sample of 107 parishes (out of 256 in the whole county) 88 people paid over £25 in 1780.⁵⁶ One of the most extensive pieces of research using Land Tax records was carried out by Davies, which covered eight counties including Leicestershire and five of its neighbours (though only one part of Lincolnshire). His main concern was with small landowners, but he noted there were 400 "potential large landowners" in Leicestershire who

⁵⁵ Thirsk, *VCH*, p. 227, 240.

⁵⁶ Hunt, 'Landownership and Enclosure', p. 501.

paid £20 or more in tax between 1780 and 1786.⁵⁷ The problems in the use of the Land Tax are compounded because the rate of tax varied from county to county, and within them, and did not reflect improvements to land or changes in its rental or market value.⁵⁸ In Leicestershire, the tax was originally levied at the rate of 4s in the pound of rent. Davies estimated that by the end of the eighteenth century, the tax represented a rate of 1s 4d per acre and his calculation was followed by Hunt. Thus £37 10s would represent a holding of 500 acres and £65, 1,000 acres. Based on these calculations, the main body of the gentry could be said potentially to comprise those non-noble individuals who paid £65 or more in tax. In addition, tax payers with a liability of £45 or more, the owners of around 700 acres, could be considered as fringe members of the gentry.

Examination of the Land Tax assessments revealed that in 1790, some 49 commoners and 13 peers paid more than £65, and 17 commoners and four peers paid between £45 and £65. Thus, on the eve of the period under study, the landed classes of Leicestershire, the peers and the gentry combined, comprised 83 people, of whom 17 were peers and

⁵⁷ E. Davies, 'The Smaller Landowner 1780-1832 in light of the Land Tax Assessment', *EconHR*, 1 (1927), pp. 87-113.

⁵⁸ In her study of common rights, enclosure and social change, Neeson used mathematical formulae to resolve some of the difficulties relating to the small landholder (*Commoners: commoners, common rights, enclosure and social change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 331-341).

66 were potential members of the gentry.⁵⁹ Below them was a group of 20 or so who paid £35-£45, who could be termed the 'sub-gentry'.⁶⁰ The greater gentry is represented by 14 people who owned approximately 3,000 acres or more each and, allowing for some possible variation from Davies' rate, paid at least £185 in Land Tax. Below them were nine who could be classified as middling (paying £130-£185), 26 lesser gentry (£65-£130) and 17 on the fringes (£45-£65).⁶¹ The entry into the gentry of the families of these 66 individuals were traced using the contemporary and modern sources cited above, to arrive at the following summary of the structure and origins of the gentry in 1790:

Table I: The Origins and Structure of the Leicestershire Gentry in 1790

	Medieval	16 th cent	17 th cent	1700-1750	After 1750	Not Known	TOTAL
Greater Gentry	3	4	5	1	1	0	14
Middling & Lesser Gentry	3	4	12	6	7	3	35
Fringe Gentry	2	1	5	1	5	3	17
TOTAL	8 (12%)	9 (14%)	22 (33%)	8 (12%)	13 (20%)	6 (9%)	66

⁵⁹ Thirsk, *VCH*, 2, identified 78 peers and gentry who paid £45 or more in 1780. The intervening decade had however seen changes at the lower levels.

⁶⁰ See the next chapter.

⁶¹ A list of those commoners who paid more than £65 in Land Tax is set out at Appendix I.

These figures show that a higher proportion of members of the greater gentry in Leicestershire in 1790 had been major landowners in the county for a longer period than those at the lower levels. Exactly half of the upper group entered the gentry in the sixteenth century or before and only two after 1700. The seventeenth century saw an influx of families who became the core of the middling and lesser gentry (34.3% of that category), with another 37% arriving in the eighteenth. Of those on the fringes (with estates of approximately 700-1,000 acres), only two (12% of the group) had origins in the medieval gentry and six (35%) came in after 1700. Outside the greater gentry, 19 (37%) entered in the eighteenth century. These findings partially support Thirsk's view of stability in the case of the leading landowners but demonstrate that the gentry as a whole was far from immobile and subject to continual changes of composition, with a stream of new arrivals at the lower levels. This pattern intensified markedly in the nineteenth century.

The Gentry in Transition 1790-1832

Between 1790 and 1830, the composition of the Leicestershire gentry changed significantly: some 30% of those who owned more than 1,000 acres either departed altogether or fell to the fringe level, or were succeeded by relatives of a different surname. The changes as they

affected the 49 families in the mainstream of the gentry in 1790 are set out in Appendix III. The wealth of two was frittered away, two became part of the peerage, at least eight estates were sold after the death of an owner. Five estates passed through the female line, eventually to relatives of a different surname, including nephews and grandchildren of the original owner, and three males who had married into the family concerned changed their names as a condition of their succession. Many of the changes were effected by legal inheritance devices adopted by the landed classes to maintain their position. As Stone wrote, "The prime preoccupation of a wealthy English landed squire was somehow to contrive to preserve his inheritance intact and to pass it on to the next generation."⁶² It was a measure of the success of many established families in preserving their property that few large estates came onto the market. Of nine newcomers, eight entered in the lesser or fringe levels and one in the middling gentry. But within a generation most of them had departed, and just three of those who owned more than 1,000 acres in the county in 1830 could be said to represent 'new money'. By 1830, reflecting a period of economic hardship and the consolidation of estates following enclosure, the number of gentry families, including the fringe, had fallen from 66 to 61. A total of 14 people made up the greater gentry, 30 fell into the middling and lesser levels and 17 were

⁶² Stone, *An Open Elite?* pp. 45-46.

on the fringe of the lesser gentry.

The greater gentry demonstrated its capacity for survival and renewal through various family and economic difficulties. All but one of the leading families at the beginning of the period survived until 1830 but they formed a disparate group. Although three of them provided a member of parliament between 1790 and 1800, others were absent or incapable of providing social or political leadership in the county. Sir Wolstan Dixie of Bosworth, the 5th baronet, was declared insane by the Commission of Lunacy in 1783 and removed to Hackney, near London. His affairs were taken over by his half-brother, Willoughby, a huntsman who has been described as lackadaisical and eccentric.⁶³ The family's position was only saved by the efforts of Eleanor Dixie, the widow of George Pochin. She moved into Bosworth Hall in 1802 on the death of her brother, the eccentric Willoughby, and rescued the family's finances. Her responsibilities increased in 1808, when her cousin, the 6th baronet, Captain Sir Beaumont Dixie, was taken prisoner in France. He was freed six years later, only to die less than a week after his return to Bosworth.⁶⁴ On her death in 1823, she left an estate of £75,000, higher than many other members of local gentry (see below). Charles

⁶³ Peter Foss & Timothy Parry, *A Truly Honest Man – the Dairy of Joseph Moxon of Market Bosworth* (Macclesfield 1998) p. 9; in his *History of Bosworth* (Leicester, 1983), Foss noted that in the later eighteenth century, the town's market and its status as an aristocratic meeting place declined.

⁶⁴ Foss, *Bosworth*, pp. 109-10, 117.

Boothby, who was the beneficiary of several complex inheritances, changed his name to Clopton in 1792 and after selling most of his Leicestershire property, “ran through three fortunes” before shooting himself in the mouth at his house in Clarges Street, Mayfair.⁶⁵ Charles Hesilrige lived in Boulogne, despite having come into the possession of the family estate at Noseley after his father, Sir Arthur, the seventh baronet, disinherited his eldest son, Robert, who succeeded to the title only, and made his home in America. The latter was succeeded by his son, Sir Arthur, who was the Collector of Customs for the East India Company, at Jessore, where he died in 1805.⁶⁶ It was not until the late 1830s that the 12th baronet, Sir Arthur Grey Hazlerigg – the spelling of the name had been changed by his father under royal licence in 1818 – became High Sheriff and an active magistrate and the family’s presence was again felt in the county. William Wilson, described by Nichols as “immensely rich,” also lived most of his life on the continent and died in Pisa, when his property passed to a relative in Norfolk.⁶⁷ The Catholic Charles Nevill played little part in county affairs and Naphthali Franks was a naturalised British subject who had “not long resided in the

⁶⁵ Colin Ellis, *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt* (Leicester, 1952), p. 10; Charles Skrymsler Boothby Clopton was the grandson of Thomas Boothby of Tooley Park, the founder of what became the Quorn Hunt. Known as ‘Prince’ Boothby, Charles Clopton was, according to the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (August 1800, p. 800), “..a well-bred, intelligent and amiable man, known and esteemed by the first people in this country.” In 1760, Boothby’s mother, Anne (formerly Clopton) wrote to the Duke of Newcastle to try, unsuccessfully, to secure a seat in parliament for him (L. B. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (1929), pp. 30-31).

⁶⁶ G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Baronetage*, 5 vols. (Exeter, 1900-06), 1, pp. 202-03.

⁶⁷ Nichols, 3, part 1, p. 10.

county".⁶⁸ In addition, Coleorton Hall had been vacant since 1702, and Sir George Beaumont first visited it in 1791 but did not return for another eleven years.⁶⁹ Two families rose up the social scale to enter the ranks of the greater gentry after 1790: George Anthony Legh Keck (1774-1860) of Stoughton, who was a county MP from 1797-1831 (except for one break of two years), and Edward Dawson of Whatton (1802-1859), who in 1827 inherited the estates of John Simpson of Launde Abbey in east Leicestershire through his wife, and was an MP from 1832-5.

In order to maintain the integrity of their estates, three of the county's older gentry families underwent name changes during this period, when property passed through females lines. In different ways their experience also illustrates that while such devices helped secure the future of a name and its inheritance, they could have a significant impact on the fortunes of a family. In 1766, Charles Grave Hudson (1730-1813), a director of the South Sea Company, had married Catherine Palmer, the daughter of Henry Palmer of Wanlip and granddaughter of Archdale Palmer, MP for Leicester in 1695. In 1791, he was created a baronet and was succeeded by his son, Charles

⁶⁸ Throsby, 1, p. 296; Nichols, 4, part 1, p. 312.

⁶⁹ Felicity Owen & David Blayney Brown, *Collector of Genius – A Life of Sir George Beaumont* (1988) p. 6. On his arrival he organised a meal for the local poor, consisting of 100 hundredweight of beef, a whole sheep, 350 gallons of ale and 36 plum puddings (*LJ*, 9 July 1802).

Thomas (1771-1827), who changed his name to Palmer on inheriting the Wanlip estates.⁷⁰ For much of the nineteenth century, Sir Charles Palmer's descendents contributed fully to county and professional life, in the military, law and the clergy, served as magistrates and married into other landed families. Success came to the Vaughan and Halford families on a larger scale. Henry Vaughan (1776-1844) was the son of a Leicester doctor, James Vaughan. In 1814 he inherited Wistow under the will of his maternal cousin, Sir Charles Halford, following the death of his widow, the Countess of Denbigh, who had retained the property in her lifetime. Henry Vaughan assumed name of Halford, and was created a baronet. He practised in London and was physician to King George III and other members of the royal family and aristocracy. Of his six brothers, Sir John Vaughan was a judge and Solicitor General, Sir Charles Vaughan was a diplomat, the Very Revd Peter Vaughan was warden of Merton College, Oxford, and the Rev Edward Thomas Vaughan was the Vicar of St Martin's and All Saints, Leicester.⁷¹ His son, the second baronet, was a Leicestershire MP from 1832-1855 and an active magistrate. In contrast, the Ashby family, who had lived at Quenby since the end of the thirteenth century and had provided MPs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, went into decline after the

⁷⁰ Throsby, 1, pp. 322-3; Nichols, 3 part 2, pp. 1096-97; *BPB* (2003).

⁷¹ *ODNB*, 24, pp. 565-6 for Dr. Sir Henry Halford; 56, pp. 162-3 for Sir Charles Vaughan, & 56, p. 189 for Sir John Vaughan; William Munk, *The Life of Sir Henry Halford* (1895); Fletcher, pp. 132-38.

estate was transferred to a son-in-law. William Ashby Latham, was born in Eltham, Kent in 1775, the son of William Latham FRS FSA (1742 - c. 1805) and Mary Elizabeth Ashby. In 1815, he assumed the surname Ashby when he inherited their estate at Quenby on the death of his mother and became William Ashby Ashby.⁷² Thereafter, the family made little contribution to county business and its holdings declined, so that by 1873, following another name change by a son-in-law, it owned only 91 acres in the county.⁷³

At the middling and lesser levels the picture was one of fluidity. Five of 26 lesser gentry families departed (19.2%) and three slipped to the fringe level. Just under a half were still members of the gentry with more than 1,000 acres in 1830. Like the Boothbys, the Skeffington inheritance was ultimately squandered by one individual: Sir Lumley Skeffington, a playwright, left Leicestershire for London, where he died in 1850, unmarried, "in lodgings, near the King's Bench prison (of which he had lately been an inmate) in his 80th year" having "dissipated all his fortune".⁷⁴ Westcotes Hall, on the south western edge of Leicester, home of the Ruding family since the sixteenth century, was sold with other land following the death of Walter Ruding (1745-1819). The

⁷² George Farnham, 'Quenby – the Manor and Hall'. *TLAHS*, 16 (1929-31), pp. 18-42; Fletcher, pp. 116-7.

⁷³ *ROL*.

⁷⁴ Cokayne, *Baronetage*, 5, p. 259. The baronetcy became extinct.

Loveden estates were sold after the death of Edward Loveden in 1822, and were acquired by a London banker, William Blake, who was married to a grand-daughter of Darker and had also bought property in Hertfordshire.⁷⁵ Two families moved from the gentry into the peerage. Richard Curzon, the son of Penn Assheton Curzon MP, succeeded his grandfather as 2nd Viscount Curzon in 1820 and the following year was granted the title of Earl Howe, through his mother, Sophia, the daughter of Admiral, Earl Howe.⁷⁶ Mary Danvers inherited Swithland Hall in Charnwood from her father, Sir John Danvers, who died in 1796. Her husband, Augustus Butler, was the son of the second Earl of Lanesborough and brother of the 3rd Earl, and added Danvers to his own name. Their son, George Butler-Danvers became the 5th Earl in 1847.⁷⁷ Several estates were maintained intact by inheritance through the female line or to more distant relatives (without the contrivance of a change of surname). Elizabeth Lawrence, for example, succeeded her aunt, Mrs Elizabeth Allanson, to the Beaumont Leys estate on the edge of Leicester originally owned by her grandfather, William Aislable, MP for Ripon.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Frederick Boase, *Modern English Biography*, 6 vols. (Truro, 1900), 1; *BLG* (1886); *ROLLR*, OS 62/205, 312, 340, 342.

⁷⁶ Fletcher, *Pedigrees*, pp. 94-7.

⁷⁷ *BPB* (1999).

⁷⁸ Nichols, 4 part 2, p. 492; *VCH*, 4, p. 498; Miss Lawrence lived in Yorkshire, where she inherited extensive estates and was "probably the wealthiest woman of her time" (Norman Gash *Politics in the Age of Peel* (1953), p. 220).

Of the newcomers to the Leicestershire gentry over these four decades, seven came from business or professional backgrounds. They included the sons of two pioneers of industry. On Holled Smith's death in 1795, his estate of nearly 1,000 acres at Normanton Turville was purchased by Richard Arkwright (1755-1843), the son of the cotton manufacturer, Sir Richard Arkwright. Nearly 30 years later William Strutt (1756-1830), the son of Arkwright's associate, Jedidiah Strutt, bought an estate at Normanton le Heath near Ashby-de-la-Zouch from Valentine Green.⁷⁹ A local banker, John Mansfield (1778-1839), MP for Leicester from 1818-26 and its Mayor in 1815, bought Birstall House to the north of the borough in 1798 but on his death the property, with its 18 bedrooms and 330 acres, was sold.⁸⁰ Very few business families established themselves with any degree of security in the forefront of the county's landed society. The most successful was the Pares family. Their strength lay in the diversity of their interests, in the law, banking and manufacturing, which they used to increase their political influence as well as in the purchase of land. The Leicester lawyer, Thomas Pares (1716-1805), bought Hopewell Hall in Derbyshire in 1780 and owned a few hundred acres in Leicestershire. His eldest son, Thomas (1746-1824) bought the site of Grey Friars in Leicester and built a mansion house on it. He died unmarried in 1824, when his estate passed to his

⁷⁹ Arkwright paid £48 Land Tax in 1830 (ROLLR QS 62/222); Strutt paid £60 on his property (ROLLR QS 62/221).

⁸⁰ *LJ*, 21 June, 2 August, 1839.

brother John Pares (1749-1833), who acquired land mainly in south and west Leicestershire, in Cosby, Narborough, Newbold Verdon and Knaptoft and Cotes to the north, among other places. Thomas junior and John were founding partners in a Leicester bank in 1800, with James Heygate and Thomas Paget, a yeoman farmer and livestock breeder.⁸¹ The business interests as well as the property in both the borough and the county and Hopewell Hall, passed to John's son, another Thomas (1790-1866), who was a Whig MP for Leicester from 1818-26.⁸²

These changes in the make-up of the Leicestershire gentry over the turn of the century reflected, and were made possible by, an active property market. The effects of enclosure and the turnover at the lower levels of the gentry contributed to the continuing availability of land in modest amounts, which provided opportunities for further acquisitions by established landowners as well as openings for newcomers.⁸³ The market was further stimulated by the widespread practice of renting out houses for periods of a few months to several years. The *Leicester*

⁸¹ See chapters 4 & 8; Thomas Paget lived at Scruptoft Hall towards 1800, which he rented from the Hartopps, (*VCH*, 5, 1964, pp. 287-92).

⁸² ROLLR QS 62/79, 83, 174, 213, 215, *Land Tax Assessments*; Billson, *Leicester*, p. 20; Thorne, 4, p. 720; *VCH*, 3 pp. 150-51.

⁸³ In 1804 and 1805, for example, the *Leicester Journal* advertised estates for sale at Melton Mowbray (500 acres), Somerby (600 acres) and Kirby Bellars (119 acres) in the north of the county, Wistow (100 acres) and Welham (497 acres) in the south, and between 79-100 acres at Anstey, Cold Newton and Ashby-de-la-Zouch across the north.

Journal newspaper listed more than 20 country houses offered for renting between 1790 and 1830.⁸⁴ Such arrangements were helped by the high rate of absenteeism and appealed to the increasing numbers of peers and gentry from around the country who were drawn each winter to Leicestershire for the hunting season. The stabling capacity and proximity to hunting territory was a highlighted feature of houses for sale or rent and many smaller ones were advertised as hunting 'boxes' or 'lodges.'⁸⁵

As will be shown, the gentry as a whole prospered for most of the period. The market value of land, usually expressed according to the number of years' rental income for which it could be bought and sold at any given time, rose from 27 to 40 years by the 1870s.⁸⁶ Rental income in Leicestershire rose from just under a £1 per acre at the end of the

⁸⁴ They included Enderby Hall, rented out in 1804; Skeffington Hall in 1806; Misterton Lodge, vacated but still owned by J. H. Franks, in 1812 and Carlton Hall, let by the Palmer family in 1816 shortly before the death of Sir Thomas Palmer. (*LJ*, 3 February 1792, 3 February 1804, 30 May 1806, 27 March 1812, 26 July 1816).

⁸⁵ For example, hunting lodge near Melton Mowbray advertised for sale in 1810, with 6 bedrooms, stabling for 10 horses and 17 acres of meadow (*LJ*, 23 November 1810), or one to let at Overseal in 1826 with 5 bedrooms, a 3,000 book library and 5-100 acres of land (*LJ*, 17 February 1826). Pevsner said there were 20 such lodges near Melton Mowbray and although architecturally undistinguished were "owned by some of the most exalted of aristocracy." (*The Buildings of England – Leicestershire and Rutland* (1992 edition), p. 321).

⁸⁶ C. Clay, 'The Price of Freehold Land in the late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *EconHR*, 27 (1974), pp. 173-89; R. C. Allen, 'The price of freehold land and the interest rate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *EconHR*, 41, (1988), pp. 33-50; B. A. Holderness, 'The English Land Market in the eighteenth Century: The Case of Lincolnshire', *EconHR*, 27, (1974), pp. 557-576; and Thompson, *Landed Society*, pp. 317-8.

eighteenth century to over £2 by the end of the whole period.⁸⁷

Improvements on estates in the northern parts of the county made them as rewarding as the rich grazing pastures of the south and east.

It was not, however, a smooth or continuous process, especially in the first half of the period. During the French Wars, land values increased sharply and fell in the subsequent decade before beginning a more sustained rise which lasted until the 1870s. The 1,000 acre estate at Normanton Turville bought by Holled Smith in 1783 for £20,000, and worth £1,000 a year, was sold after Smith's death thirteen years later, to Richard Arkwright for £30,000, an increase of 50% in 12 years.⁸⁸ Other examples suggest more modest rises. The estate at Aston Flamville near Hinckley inherited in 1778 by Edmund Cradock Hartopp from his uncle, Joseph Cradock, was worth £1,100 a year in a parish of 1,060 acres.⁸⁹ Throsby commented that the rent roll of George Legh Keck at Stoughton was worth £1,100 a year (for an estate of in excess of 1,000 acres). Among the selected families, the rental income of the

⁸⁷ See G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 1112, and E. J. T. Collins (ed.) *Agrarian History, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 1930-31. In his survey of 1790, William Marshall stated that rental values in Leicestershire were between 15s and £1 per acre (*Rural Economy*, p. 3).

⁸⁸ *LJ*, 22 March, 5 April 1783. F. S. Fitton, *The Arkwrights* (Manchester, 1989), p. 231. In 1810, Thomas Pares wrote to John Frewen Turner about some land at Knossington, near Cold Overton, which had not been sold at auction and for which he was asking £4,500. In a draft reply, Frewen Turner noted that this was at a rate of £30 an acre, the price he said Richard Arkwright had paid for Normanton (ESRO FRE/1977, 1985, 27 October, 2 November, 1810).

⁸⁹ Nichols, 4 part 2 p. 450.

Frewen family, with estates in Leicestershire and Sussex and a house in London, grew markedly. The gross rental due from the estates at Sapcote for the year from March 1795 was £824 rising to £1,522 by 1814-15.⁹⁰ At Cold Overton, on the opposite side of the county by the border with Rutland, rents between 1795 and 1800 averaged £920.⁹¹ By 1820 this had increased to £1,948.⁹² Charles Packe received £4,471 from his estates in Prestwold in 1824, rising to £5,085 the following year when the “depression in agriculture having ceased, former rents were collected,” but falling back to £4,560 in 1826.⁹³ Packe twice remitted a percentage of his rent demands because of economic conditions: in 1815 and again 12 years later, by 10%.⁹⁴ Among the lesser gentry, William Herrick owned just under 1,000 acres at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁹⁵ As the prelude to its rapid rise in mid-century, some small acquisitions were made subsequently, and by 1832, shortly before his death, the rental from his Leicestershire properties stood at £2,777.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ ESRO, FRE/8775, FRE/8776, *Accounts of James Carter for Mr Frewen Turner*.

⁹¹ ESRO FRE/8799, *Memorandum Book of Rev Thomas Frewen Turner*.

⁹² ESRO FRE/8820. Additionally, rents from the Sussex estates amounted to £1,183 in 1810, rising to £2,499 by 1835 (ESRO, FRE/8820, FRE/7309, FRE/7359/2).

⁹³ ROLLR, DE 258/D/5.

⁹⁴ *LJ*, 29 December 1815, 29 June 1827.

⁹⁵ ROLLR DG9/2041, *Particulars of part of the Estates belonging to William Herrick situate in the County of Leicester*, 1809.

⁹⁶ ROLLR DG9/2025, figures compiled by William Herrick of his late uncle's rental at the time of his death; see also next chapter.

Few appear to have had other significant sources of income. Sir George Beaumont was able to draw on the earnings of coals mines at Coleorton, which had been worked from the fifteenth century and brought in £1,000 a year.⁹⁷ Sir William Halford (formerly Vaughan) saw his rewards as physician to the royal family and nobility rise from £220 in 1792 to more than £10,00 a year after 1809, when he was “much in attendance at Windsor”, in addition to a rental income from Wistow and other estates that had reached £4,200 by 1823.⁹⁸ Among the newcomers to the gentry, the banker and businessman, John Pares, had an income of £3,000 a year in the early 1800s from one concern alone, which mainly involved exporting goods to America.⁹⁹ After some initial resistance by landowners, “the bulk of the nobility and gentry” supported - and some invested in - canal building.¹⁰⁰ The most active, such as Thomas Frewen Turner, chaired meetings and held shares in navigation companies.¹⁰¹

The cash wealth of the gentry, as indicated in probate records, varied greatly. While their personal assets were substantial, few of Leicestershire gentry counted among the richest men in the country.

⁹⁷ Owen & Brown, *Genius*, pp. 107-9, 140.

⁹⁸ Munk, *Halford*, pp. 39-40, 63-65.

⁹⁹ ROLLR, DE/365, note by his daughter, Anne, the wife of Thomas Paget MP, 22 September 1864.

¹⁰⁰ See A. Temple Patterson, ‘The Making of the Leicestershire Canals 1764-1814’, *TLAHS*, 27 (1951), pp. 66-99, and his *Radical Leicester*, pp. 29-41.

¹⁰¹ ESRO FRE/754/758/760, *Pocket Diaries*, 1790, 1798, 1800

After 1796, Probate Act Books and Legacy Duty Registers noted the cash value of a person's estate (though initially not in every case) but did not (before 1898) include land. In a sample of the probate records of 20 heads of families between 1805 and 1832, three had personal estates valued at under £10,000, including two of six baronets in the sample; nine between £10,000 and £20,000, including one baronet; seven up to £50,000 and one over £100,000.¹⁰² Rubinstein's examination of these records places these figures in a national context: in the period 1809-49, the estates of 11 people were valued in excess of £1,000,000 and another nine were above the half million pound mark.¹⁰³ Only one of the millionaires had any Leicestershire connections – the industrialist Richard Arkwright. Rubinstein has also shown that finance and commerce were already producing more people with personal wealth greater than £100,000 than landownership, in the period 1809-39.¹⁰⁴ Many of the business and professional classes had less of their resources invested in land and it is likely that the probate sums accounted for the bulk of their assets.

¹⁰² The highest total was that of Thomas Frewen Turner (1755-1829) in the category of up to £140,000 (NA, PROB8/222). Among peers, the personal wealth of Heneage Finch, 4th Earl of Aylesford (1751-1812), was valued in the £175,000 to £200,000 band. (NA PROB 8/206).

¹⁰³ W. D. Rubinstein, 'British Millionaires 1809-1949', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLVIII, 1974, pp. 202-23.

¹⁰⁴ Just under a quarter of the 797 people with estates at that amount were landowners (22.3%), while 43.2% came from commerce and finance, 19.8% from the professions and administration, and 13.9% from business and industry. (W D Rubinstein, *The Structure of Wealth-holding in Britain 1809-39: A Preliminary Anatomy*, Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research (1992).)

The ways in which the gentry deployed its resources appear to have followed a pattern that was typical of the landed classes of the period. Its expenditure involved, first, supporting a lifestyle that was deemed appropriate for a country gentleman and his family, and, more importantly, secondly, safeguarding its future financial interests. The former included the consumption of material goods, entertainment, sport (which in Leicestershire meant hunting), travel (to London and Bath, for example, as well as on the continent) and the arts (building up a collection of paintings and furniture, for instance, was a longer-term investment as well as a statement of present status and prestige). Also to be taken into account were the costs of social and public life, in the sometimes expensive outlay for political activity, or in offices such as High Sherriff and in supporting financially any number of charities and good causes. Both immediate and strategic objectives were secured by spending on land and property, including house construction and renovation, land purchases, and the improvement and maintenance of estates and buildings.

The transmission of the wealth and property of landed families from one generation to the next involved some families in burdensome commitments which were formalised in complex legal settlements. The

application of 'strict settlement,' which had been in operation since the mid-seventeenth century, helped keep estates intact by imposing limitations on what could be sold or disposed of and defining the line of succession. Renewable at each generation, they also made provision for wives, daughters and younger sons, as well the eldest male child and heir. The workings of this system of inheritance have been widely, and expertly, discussed.¹⁰⁵ It will be noted briefly here and some aspects will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. Annuities, jointures and allowances to family members which arose from these arrangements could represent major items of expenditure – and sometimes burdens – on an estate. Their effect on some Leicestershire gentry families can be illustrated by a number of marriage and family settlements. In a settlement in 1821, on his marriage to Kitty Jenkyn Reading of Wimpole Street, London, Charles William Packe, the eldest son of Charles James Packe, received £1,000 a year while his father was alive. In a separate settlement, Kitty received £500 a year for her own use from the estate of her godfather Jenkyn Reading of Harpenden,

¹⁰⁵ See Habakkuk, *Estates System* for the most comprehensive survey; for differing views on strict settlement, see L. Bonfield, 'Affective Families, Open Elites and Strict Family Settlements in Early Modern England', *EconHR*, 39, 1986, pp. 341-54, Eileen Spring, 'The Strict Settlement: Its Role in English History', *EconHR*, 41, 1988, pp. 454-60, and Bonfield's reply to Spring, 'Strict Settlement and the Family: A Differing View', *EconHR*, 41, (1988), pp. 461-66. The substance of the issues debated by Spring and Bonfield concerned the eighteenth century and earlier and are not discussed here. Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, Thompson, *Landed Society*, Mingay, *Gentry* and Beckett, *Aristocracy*, discussed its evolution and its importance in keeping estates off the market, while making some provision for younger sons and daughters. Barbara English & John Saville, set out the background in *Strict Settlement: A Guide for Historians* (Hull, 1983).

Hertfordshire, who had died in 1807, when the money was placed in trust.¹⁰⁶ Other examples of the scale of financial provision made by heads of gentry families come from wills and Legacy Duty Registers. John Frewen Turner, who had mortgage debts of £5,500 on his property, gave legacies of £15,000 each to his three sons, John, Thomas and Charles, and to his daughter, Selina, and 21 other bequests totalling £3,600 to family and friends (and £100 to Leicester Infirmary), from his personal cash estate of £140,000.¹⁰⁷ His main properties in Leicestershire, Sussex, Kent and house in London, passed first to his wife, Eleanor and after her death to Thomas. Charles inherited the family's estates in Yorkshire. His wife also received an annual sum of £1,500 to be charged on the estate.¹⁰⁸ After his father's death in 1791, he had paid his mother an annual sum of £400 from his Leicestershire rental income, which lasted until her own death twelve years later.¹⁰⁹ Such sums are below the amounts involved in aristocratic families - of up to £2,000 or approximately 20% of gross income for a wife's jointure, the annual amount payable to a wife from her marriage dowry

¹⁰⁶ ROLLR 803/44, *Marriage Settlement*, 27 October 1821.

¹⁰⁷ NA IR/26/1208/130-2, 1829. Frewen Turner lent sums of money to numerous distant relatives and fellow gentlemen: Clement Winstanley of Braunstone borrowed £1,000 from him (his letters to Frewen Turner, 10 December 1804 in which he accepted an additional loan of £700, (ESRO FRE/1608), and a letter of 16 May 1808 indicating repayment of £1,000, (FRE/1823))

¹⁰⁸ NA, PROB11/1754, *Will of John Frewen Turner*, proved 13 April 1829. The house at 128, Upper Thames Street, London was rented out as a warehouse for £25 and was compulsorily demolished in 1829 to make way for a new London Bridge, for which Frewen Turner received £4,950 (ESRO FRE/252, FRE/253 FRE/707)

¹⁰⁹ FRE/8775, *Rental and Expenses for Sapcote*, 1795-96.

and charged upon the estate after her husband's death - but are at a level that might be expected for the gentry during this period.¹¹⁰

House building was one of the principal affirmations of the gentry's status and confidence as well as a clear indicator of its wealth and resources. The period from the 1790 until well in to the following century has been identified as one in which there was a surge of new houses built by the landed classes, following an earlier peak which lasted from the Restoration until around 1730.¹¹¹ The estimated cost of building a new house commensurate with a greater gentry estate of 3-5,000 acres was £7,000 towards the end of the eighteenth century, rising to £22,000 for a house more than three times the size on an estate of above 10,000 acres.¹¹² The participation of the Leicestershire gentry in this wave of house building was however low: only three of 76 gentry families across the period built new houses in the four decades beginning in 1790. The amount of new building by the gentry was lower in this period than in the first half of the eighteenth century, when nine houses were built, including the most expensive of all, the £100,000 Gopsall Hall for Jennens. Just three major country houses were built in the county between 1750 and 1790: Joseph Cradock's Gumley Hall,

¹¹⁰ Habakkuk, *Estates System*, pp. 85-6.

¹¹¹ R. G. Wilson & A. L. Mackley, *Creating Paradise – The Building of the English Country House 1660-1880* (2000) p. 202.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 294.

Braunstone Hall for Clement Winstanley, and Baggrave Hall for John Edwyn and later inherited by Andrew Burnaby. After 1790, Sir George Beaumont spent £15,000 on Coleorton Hall between 1802 and 1808, against an initial estimate of £8,000;¹¹³ Edward Dawson built Whatton House in about 1802, and George Pochin rebuilt Barkby Hall around 1810.¹¹⁴ Two families on the fringes re-built their houses: Francis Turville at Husbands Bosworth between Lutterworth and Market Harborough, in the early 1790s, and in 1820, Edward Farnham at Quorn House.¹¹⁵ A larger number of gentry houses in the county were remodelled or modernised, with for example new wings added or major changes to internal features.¹¹⁶ Sir Henry Halford's biographer said that by 1823 he had spent £70,000 on Wistow, adding to the property, paying off a £23,000 mortgage and improving the church and farms as well as making extensive repairs and alterations to the dilapidated Hall.¹¹⁷ Some of the peers also carried out major works after 1790: the Duke of Rutland spent a six figure sum on rebuilding Belvoir Castle between 1801 and 1830, the 2nd Earl of Moira built a new Hall at Donington in the 1790s, and the Earl of Lanesborough rebuilt Swithland Hall in 1822 following a fire.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 269; Owen & Brown, *Genius*, pp. 111, 131; Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, pp. 136-7.

¹¹⁴ Pevsner, *Leicestershire* p. 279; Cantor, *Country Houses*, pp. 34, 69.

¹¹⁵ Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, pp. 184, 356; Cantor, *Country Houses*, pp. 45, 60.

¹¹⁶ These included Halls at Wistow, Skeffington, Carlton Curlieu, Cold Overton, Langton, Lockington, Quorn and Shenton (see Pevsner & Cantor).

¹¹⁷ Munk, *Halford*, pp. 65, 275.

Charitable donations were a constant feature of gentry life, part of the duty and obligations attached to being a gentleman. They were discharged in a manner which suggests a hierarchy and some competitiveness between individuals. Amounts given to the poor, to deserving causes and to civic undertakings could add up to several hundred pounds a year. Fund raising for the national effort in the French wars attracted much support. Following a county meeting chaired by Earl Ferrers in April 1794, £7,242 was raised within a month for the Militia, with £200 donated each by the county MPs, William Pochin and P. A. Curzon, £300 from Sir William Skeffington, £200 from John Frewen Turner and £100 each from other members of the gentry. Clement Winstanley and William Herrick gave £340 each.¹¹⁸ Further money was raised three years later and in 1803 and 1805 for the Yeomanry Cavalry: the Duke of Rutland led the way with £500, with peers and gentry contributing between £50 and £400 in a total of more than £9,000.¹¹⁹ Money was also raised from time to time for Leicester Infirmary, which the gentry had supported since its inception in 1766,¹²⁰ the Lunatic Asylum, church building, for the relief of distress in industry (in 1822 and 1826) and for new Assembly Rooms and a race course in

¹¹⁸ *LJ*, 2 May 1794.

¹¹⁹ *LJ*, 29 September 1797, 5 August 1803, 19 August, 2, 9, 16 & 23 September 1805

¹²⁰ E. R. Frizelle & J. D. Martin, *The Leicester Royal Infirmary 1771-1971* (Leicester, 1971) and J. Thompson, *A History of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century* (Leicester, 1871) p. 130-33.

the borough, sometimes in regular subscriptions and sometimes as contributions as part of a well-publicised campaign.

Thus, although all but one of the greater gentry families in 1790 survived within the gentry as a whole to 1830, more than 20% of the members of the gentry at the opening of the period had disappeared forty years later. Just under 15% of its members at the lower levels by the end of this period were newcomers to Leicestershire landed society. Some were landowners elsewhere; self-made businessmen were still few in number. There were however clear gulfs in wealth between the wealthiest and those at the fringe levels who did not have other property or sources of income. Probate records suggest that the liquid assets of many of them while significant were not huge in comparison to some peers and industrial magnates. At any one point, approximately one in five members of the gentry lived outside the county and with houses available to rent as well as modest estates to purchase, it was becoming attractive to those who perhaps first surveyed it on the hunting field, to peers and gentry from elsewhere, as well as bankers and businessmen from outside Leicestershire. In the decades following 1830, however, the gentry was poised to change more significantly than before, with an increase in new entrants and expansion at the lesser levels.

4. The Making of the Victorian Gentry

Across the middle of the nineteenth century the composition of the gentry became transformed as the pace of change quickened. As Gash noted of the period 1815-65, the gentry was "in a state of continuous flux."¹ This chapter examines the effect of these changes over the period in the character and structure of the gentry.

In Leicestershire, 11 out of the 44 the gentry families who owned more than a thousand acres in 1830 ceased to be landowners in the county over the next four decades and their property was sold (25%). In addition, three became part of the peerage, four fell to the fringe level and the estates of three passed to a different branch of a family. While most of the long-standing Leicestershire families among the greater gentry survived, the turnover among the lower levels was pronounced. The changes are summarized in Appendix III. In the place of those who ceased to be part of the gentry, came a variety of major landowners from other parts of the country, and businessmen and professionals, mainly from outside the county. The numbers of lesser gentry grew so more than two-thirds of that level at the end of the period had joined it after 1830. There was also a sharp increase in the

¹ Norman Gash, *Aristocracy and People – Britain 1815-1865* (1983 edition) p. 19.

number of those who could maintain something of the country gentleman's way of life with less than 1,000 acres or on incomes from land below £1,000 a year. Many at this level, with incomes from land lower than is often regarded as necessary to support the life of country gentleman, were nonetheless accepted as such and performed the traditional public functions of their class. These developments marked an expansion in the size of landed society, and its transformation to one in which newcomers of adequate means could flourish, unencumbered by the problems of maintaining large estates or brought up in ancient paternalistic traditions which governed relations with local communities and workforces.

The more people there were who aspired to enter landed society, the less cohesive the gentry became, and the identity of the group became less clearly defined. By the mid-1870s it had become less rigid, less stable and more diffuse. It was still identifiable as part of a ruling elite but some of the certainties surrounding its identity and its role were less clearly defined and less confidently asserted. The former equations which matched pedigree and the size of estates with power and status were beginning to lose the force of unassailable social and economic logic. All those who considered themselves to be 'country gentlemen' shared certain values and interests as members of an elite of the richest

half a per cent of the population, but a gulf existed between magnates who owned land in several counties and those who had 800 or 900 acres in one location. What appears to have been a strengthening of the gentry, in numbers and in new blood, undermined its internal sense of cohesion at the same time that its power and authority was slipping away. By the advent of the agricultural depression of the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the political and administrative reforms of the 1880s, the identity and nature of the gentry in Leicestershire was already compromised.

The reasons for this transformation are various. Rising rents in a period of relative economic and political stability made land a more attractive long-term investment as well as a symbol of status (although rates of return remained below those to be gained from finance and some sectors of industry).² Hunting had turned Leicestershire into a meeting-place for the rich and the fashionable from throughout Britain and abroad, and the coming of the railways placed it within easier reach of London.³ As in the earlier decades, while few larger estates came onto the market, medium and smaller ones frequently changed hands,

² See Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 252; Beckett, *Aristocracy*, pp. 197-8; Mingay, *Gentry*, p. 168.

³ The Leicester to Swannington Railway was opened in 1832, for coal rather than passenger traffic. The network for personal travel grew with the formation of the Midland Counties Railway in 1844, a connection to lines into London from 1857 and the completion of a direct route to the capital in 1868 (Millward, p. 106; A. Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester – A History of Leicester 1780-1850* (Leicester, 1954) pp. 260-74; J Simmons in *VCH*, 3, p. 108-27).

attracting a range of monied people. Some local yeomen families advanced up the social scale to become minor gentlemen. The more modest country houses and estates appealed to the growing ranks of the middle class professionals, mainly lawyers and bankers. Local businessmen and hosiery manufacturers did not enter landed society to the same degree: they did not amass the necessary capital and most preferred the suburban villa close to their commercial interests to the country seat. But their absence opened the way to those from London or from more profitable businesses in the north of England who wanted to own a small estate in Leicestershire and had the means, in a time of rising prices, to take a first step into landed society. Established gentry from outside Leicestershire acquired land as an adjunct to a property portfolio which crossed county boundaries, for purposes of investment or for reasons of status, or to provide a residence at the heart of sporting 'high' society. Some of these newcomers stayed for just a few years and for many who wanted a 'hunting lodge' for the winter season, renting remained a popular alternative. One result was an increase in the number of those who could be more appropriately described as 'the gentry in Leicestershire' rather than as members of 'the Leicestershire gentry'. Very few of the outsiders or those who had a small proportion of their property in the county played any significant part in its politics or public life.

Changes in Composition 1832-1875

Change in the membership of the gentry was more pronounced in the second half of the period. As well as an increase rate of departure, there was an influx of newcomers so that the number of people who owned more than 1,000 acres in Leicestershire increased from 44 in 1830 to 60 by the 1870s. It is possible to measure the extent of these changes through the 1873 *Return of Owners of Land*, which named all those individuals who owned more than one acre in Great Britain (excluding London) and their annual income from land. Its data has been supplemented by Bateman's *The Great Landowners* published in four editions over the following decade, and provided an alphabetical list of landowners with more than 2,000 acres nationally.

In Leicestershire, the *Return* listed the names of 4,927 people who owned more than one acre in both the borough and the county, with the exact amount of land owned in each case, their place of residence, usually given as a town or village, and the gross annual value of the land. Analysis of these names has shown that 22 members of the nobility and 60 commoners owned estates of more than 1,000 acres in the county. Another 15 peers had estates of under 1,000 acres, while 19

commoners owned between 750 and 1,000 acres and 44 between 500 and 750 and can be considered as candidates for the gentry fringe. The 60 members of the main part of the gentry together owned 25.2% of the land, 0.8% more than peers and members of their families. The fringe gentry owned another 7.7%. A break-down of the structure and composition of the gentry at this time and their income is set out in Appendices IV and V.

The names contained in the Return have been compared with those in the Land Tax Assessments four decades earlier, to determine the extent of changes among the gentry. In many respects, the two sources differ. The earlier records were gathered over time for the purposes of collecting revenue according to an unchanging formula. The *Return* was compiled to gather data on the exact amount of land owned by individuals and their earnings from it at a particular point in time, when the alleged concentration of landownership in a few hands was the topic of political debate.⁴ The *Return* permits, with some qualification, a precision on the amount of land owned and income which is not possible to extract from the Land Tax Assessments. Some underestimation of those at the fringe level in the first half of the period may have occurred, given that the rates of Land Tax were rarely adjusted, to

⁴ For the background to the *Return*, see Spring's Introduction to the 1971 reprint of Bateman, pp. 1-3.

allow, for example, for estate improvement or rising rents. But it is argued that the apparent increase in the lower two groups between 1830 and the early 1870s is more the product of wider social and economic developments than data error.

Analysis of the names contained in the *Return*, compared with those in the Land Tax Assessments, confirmed the acceleration of change. Some 18 of the 44 gentry families (40.9%) who owned at least 1,000 acres in Leicestershire in 1830 (according to the tax records) ceased to be part of the gentry during the following 40 years. Of these, three were made peers or married into peerage families, four slipped into the fringe gentry and the property of one passed to another branch of a family. The numbers of families who retained their property in a direct line of descent fell from 65.3% between 1790 and 1830 to 52.3% in the second half of the period. The proportion who dropped out altogether rose from 14.3% during the first four decades to 22.7% after 1830. Over the whole period, 20 out of the original 49 main gentry families survived until the 1870s (40.8%), and 15 left (30.6%), their property sold. The changes as they affected the gentry of 1790 over the whole period are set out in Appendix III(c).

Between 1830 and 1875, the ranks of the gentry were swollen by 34 newcomers. Two entered the greater gentry directly, seven joined at the middle level and 25 came into the lesser gentry. The extent of the changes were more significant still among the fringe, defined as those who earned £1,000 a year from under 1,000 acres. By 1870, there were more than 50 new entrants at this level, who had sufficient income from their estates to enable them to be considered – and largely accepted - as part of the county's landed society. Also to be taken into account were 20 individuals who ranked as members of the gentry by virtue of their holdings in other counties but owned under 1,000 acres in Leicestershire and earned less than £1,000 from them. The influx of new entrants at the lesser and fringe levels further illustrate that the vast majority of new entrants did not leap immediately to the highest rungs but invested more cautiously as they took their first steps towards becoming country gentlemen. Their numbers changed the balance and structure of the gentry and thrust the smaller gentry landowner to the forefront of county affairs.

Continuity was more evident at the higher levels. The five leading gentry landowners were all from 'old', that is pre-eighteenth century families. Some had progressed through landed society over several generations. No fewer than eight of the 10 who made up the greater gentry in

Leicestershire in 1873, had entered landed society, at a lower level, before 1700. These ten held 47,530 acres (9.1% of the county).⁵ Seven of them had their seats or main estates in the north of the county in areas of the county traditionally associated with larger landowners.

The leading five members came from older gentry families: Phillipps de Lisle of Garendon, William Perry Herrick of Beaumanor, William Pochin of Barkby, Edward Hartopp of Dalby and Sir Alexander Dixie of Market Bosworth. With the exception of the late seventeenth century entrant, the Phillipps, they had all owned some land in Leicestershire since at least the sixteenth century. In contrast to the somewhat detached posture of many of the main gentry families at the end of the eighteenth century, seven of the 10 provided a member of parliament between 1832 and 1867. Their identity was rooted in Leicestershire: most held more than half their total amount of land in the county and had their main residence there. Three, Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle of Garendon, the largest single gentry landowner in the county with more than 7,000 acres (but deeply indebted), Edward Dawson and Sir Henry Halford, owned no land elsewhere. Just two had under half their property in the county: Hartopp of Dalby, who possessed estates from his mother's family in Ireland and Herrick of Beaumanor, who inherited property in

⁵ To these can be added Packe of Prestwold. Following the death of George Packe in 1874, his son, Hussey Packe increased his family's estates from 2,885 acres in 1873 to 3,309 acres by 1873.

the west midlands and Wales from his maternal grandfather, William Perry, a Staffordshire industrialist.

While these figures represented the leadership of the gentry, they were not the largest class of landowners in the county. The five greatest owners – and seven of the ten largest - were peers or members of their families. The top 10 peers owned 92,949 acres (17.9% of the county) and together all 37 peers and members of peerage families possessed 126,678 acres (24.4%). Only five had more than half of their land in Leicestershire and only one, Henry Powys-Keck, the brother of the 3rd Lord Lilford, who inherited the Keck estates, had all his land in the county. Earl Howe, Lord Overstone and Earl Cowper had estates in 11 counties, the Earl of Bradford in nine and the Earl of Stamford in eight. The Duke of Rutland, although the largest landowner in the county with 30,188 acres - more than three times more than any member of the gentry - owned another 39,949 acres (57% of his total) in six other counties. Only Charles Abney-Hastings, the 11th Earl of Loudoun, whose wife was descended from the Earl of Moira, also reached five figures in the county, with 10,174 acres. The majority of peers who owned land in Leicestershire did not possess it in large estates there: four held between 2,000 and 3,000 acres and six between 1,000 and 2,000. Of the 15 peers who owned under 1,000 acres in Leicestershire, four had

under 100. Most peers lived elsewhere and their engagement in Leicestershire affairs was limited.

The top tier had also undergone changes across the middle of the century. One of the county's oldest families, Nevill of Holt, sold the entirety of their estates in the late 1860s, the only one among the greater gentry to do so. They had been for some time disconnected from the county and had ceased to live at Nevill Holt Hall, their seat since the fifteenth century. The purchaser of the Hall and its 1,600 acre estate in 1868 was Henry George Greiveson, a coal owner and merchant from Darlington, who sold it eight years later to the shipping magnate Edward Cunard.⁶ Three other greater gentry families, Cave, Keck and Wilson, became part of the nobility, either by elevation to the peerage or absorption into peerage families.⁷ Other members of the greater gentry sold some of their land. A year after Cosmo Nevill sold Holt, Sir John Cradock Hartopp sold Gumley Hall, which had formerly belonged to Joseph Cradock, to his brother-in-law, Captain Thomas Whitmore, who

⁶ *VCH*, 5, p. 245. Cosmo Neville was named in the *Return* as the owner of Holt but Greiveson has been listed in Appendix V.

⁷ In 1832, Robert Wilson, whose main estates were in Norfolk, was recognised as the 9th Baron Berners, through the female line; seven years later, Sarah Cave (1768-1862), the daughter of Sir Thomas Cave (1737-80), became Baroness Braye in her own right, through her great-grand-mother, Lady Margaret Verney. Following the death without children in 1860 of George Legh Keck, his property passed to Henry Powys (1812-63), the son of his cousin, Henrietta Atherton and Thomas Powys, the 2nd Lord Lilford.

came from a prominent Shropshire family.⁸ The prosperity of the period was reflected in the entry of four families into the top tier: two who had been at lower levels, Herrick and Halford, and two newcomers, Nathaniel Curzon of Breedon on the north western edge of the county, a barrister who came from a long-standing landowning family, and the banker Thomas Paget. Curzon, who was distantly related to Earl Howe and Baron Scarsdale, bought nearby Lockington Hall from the Story family in 1872.⁹ Paget was a member of a leading Leicester family: Thomas Paget junior (1778-1862), was the son of the Thomas Paget (1732-1813), who had joined Pares and Heygate as partners of a bank in Leicester in 1800.¹⁰ Thomas junior joined the firm, married Anne Pares, the daughter of John, and was a Liberal MP for the county from 1831-32 and the first Mayor of the reformed borough in 1836. He built up his landholdings gradually, in small pockets across the county. His eldest son, Thomas Tertius Paget (1807-92), who also became a Liberal MP, was one of the few men to cross the borough-county social and economic divide, combining his business interests with radical politics and a gentry lifestyle. No other manufacturer or industrialist entered the greater gentry in Leicestershire during this time.

⁸ *VCH*, 5, p. 118; see also chapter 7.

⁹ ROLLR 1536/119, *Particulars of Sale*, 1872.

¹⁰ See chapters 3 & 8.

Like the greater gentry, the middling tier was compact and included some of long-established families. According to the 1873 Return, there were 14 people at this level, who each owned between 2,000 and 3,000 acres in Leicestershire, and held 33,235 acres (6.4% of the county). The number had increased from eight in 1830, back to a level closer to that of 1790. The property of three had passed to other gentry families through the female line or to more remote branches and one was sold after the death of the last member of the family.¹¹ Among seven newcomers were two businessmen from outside the county: Charles Brook, a second generation Yorkshire mill owner, and Daniel Thwaites, a Lancashire brewer and MP. Brook had purchased Enderby Hall in 1866 and by his death seven years had rapidly established himself, in the words of the *Leicester Journal*, as a "highly respected" and "excellent and valuable" person who had become a stalwart of county society.¹² Six had all their land in the county, four had more than half there and four had their main holdings elsewhere. At least four were non-resident and did not regularly participate in Leicestershire politics or society.

¹¹ In 1862, Braunstone Hall passed to Ralph Pochin, a naval captain and the youngest son of George Pochin of Barkby, following the death by drowning near Coblenz, of the unmarried James Winstanley, the last male member of the family. Pochin was married to James' sister, Anne, a distant cousin (Fletcher).

¹² *LJ*, 12 & 19 July 1872. Brook was a magistrate, was active in Tory politics and a generous benefactor.

The lesser gentry was however substantially re-made over the period. Nine of the 22 families at this level in 1830 had either sold or died out, and three dropped to the fringe with under 1,000 acres by the 1870s. Over the four decades from 1830, three moved up the scale, three families dropped to the lesser gentry from higher levels and there were 26 new entrants, to bring the total of the lesser gentry to 36 by the end of the period. Together they owned 50,404 acres (9.7% of the county). Their land was more likely to be found in the south of the county, among the marketable smaller properties on the rich grazing pastures that had not historically been held by a noble or old gentry landowner. Some thirteen out of 16 known estates in the south east of the county were held by members of the lesser gentry.¹³

Among the 36 at this level, 10 had been members of the gentry before 1830, and of the newcomers, nine were members of landed families in other counties who had acquired estates in Leicestershire, seven had risen from the fringe or sub-gentry, and 10 were from a business or professional background. Five of the 10 were professionals rather than manufacturers and three of them came from families who had also earlier been smaller landowners in the county. A majority of the lesser gentry held their land only in Leicestershire, while nine had most of the

¹³ Of 32 members of the lesser gentry whose principal properties are known, 10 had their estates in the north west of the county, six in the north east, four in the south west and 13 in the south east (derived from ROL).

land outside the county and another four had smaller amounts of property elsewhere. The rate of turnover among the fringe gentry was even higher. More than half families in this category in 1830 (10 out of 18) were no longer categorised as gentry forty years later. Most of these were departures which resulted from failure in the male line and sales which, unlike the larger estates, put their property onto the open market. Three rose to higher levels in the landowning hierarchy, including Edward Strutt, whose main interests were in Derbyshire. He was created the 1st Baron Belper in 1856 to become one of the first 'industrial' peers, and by the end of the period his son, Henry, the 2nd Baron, owned more than 2,000 acres in Leicestershire.¹⁴

The high turnover is not to be equated with a comprehensive upheaval in the make-up of the gentry. Overall, the majority of newcomers were already landowners to some degree. One of the most significant elements at the middling and lower levels were the members of existing landed families from outside the county. Four members of the middling gentry (28.6%) and ten at the lesser gentry (28.5%) at the end of the period owned most of their land in other counties. Of the 60 commoners who owned some land in Leicestershire and were listed in Bateman (and therefore owned at least 2,000 acres nationally), 35 had

¹⁴ *ODNB*, 13, pp. 112-3.

more land elsewhere, including all 26 who had under 1,450 acres in the county. Seven had land in two counties, seven in three counties, three in four, three of them in five counties, five in six counties altogether, and one in a total of seven counties. Their holdings were mainly in counties bordering on Leicestershire, where they had their principal seat and in whose affairs they were more closely engaged.

The increase in the number of business and professional men who acquired estates of more than 1,000 acres in the second half of the period was however marked. Between 1790 and 1832, only Thomas Pares and the London banker, William Blake, entered the main body of the gentry, compared with 14 in the following 40 years. Together, businessmen and professionals accounted for half of the new entrants after 1830, whose families owned 1,000 acres or more by the 1870s. Over the period as a whole, they make up 15 out of the 33 (45%) who entered the lesser gentry and above after 1790 and whose descendents remained within it 80 years later. The majority were bankers or lawyers. Just seven manufacturers or industrialists bought estates of more than 1,000 acres in Leicestershire over the whole period, of whom four were local: Thomas Stokes (1784-1867), a hosiery manufacturer, a radical who was the Mayor of Leicester in 1838 and 1841 and High Sheriff for the county in 1850, Isaac Harrison, nephew and heir of a

market gardener who had exploited a medicinal spring at Newfoundpool, William Worswick (c. 1800-71), who owned Swannington colliery and bought Birstall and Normanton Halls around 1860, and Edward Warner (1804-94), a Loughborough hosiery manufacturer who bought Quorn Hall in 1855.¹⁵ Paget and Pares had hosiery and other commercial interests but the main source of their income came from banking. The appeal of Leicestershire for northern businessmen was no doubt varied: investment in land would have to make financial sense but the county was centrally placed between the north and London and the hunting field enabled them to rub shoulders with the aristocracy, and for some the sport was a compelling reason in itself.¹⁶

Below these levels, rising rental income also produced a significant increase in the number of fringe gentry, landowners who could earn £1,000 a year from less than 1,000 acres. By 1873, there were 60 people in this category, members of the fringe gentry. Together they owned 39,684 acres (7.7% of the county) in amounts between 182 and 991 acres, with only 19 of the total in possession of more than 750 acres. Only eight were heads of exiting gentry families (and included

¹⁵ For Stokes: Bateman, p. 425; Henry Hartopp, (ed.), *Roll of the Mayors and Lord Mayors of Leicester* (Leicester, 1932), pp. 195-6; Harrison: VCH, 4, p. 455; Worswick: Peter Neaverson, 'Califat Colliery, Swannington Common: Site History and Excavation Report', *TLAHS*, 74 (2000) p. 93; Warner: VCH, 3, pp. 9-16, Fletcher, pp. 191-2, Bateman, p. 465. By 1883 he owned 2,014 acres in Leicestershire, 3,025 in Yorkshire and 1,084 in Nottinghamshire, worth a total of £9,171 per year.

¹⁶ VCH, 3, pp. 272-75; newcomers such as Tailby, Cunard and Coupland (see below) were all prominent huntsmen.

one member of the clergy). Of the remaining 52, who were not part of the gentry in 1830, the origins of 10 are unknown. The backgrounds of the remaining 42 can however be traced. They were a varied group, and were made up as follows:

3 members of junior branches of Leicestershire gentry families, two of whom were clergymen;

14 former local minor or 'yeomen' landowners, of whom three were clergy;

10 members of landowning families from other counties, including two clergymen;

8 other churchmen (making 16 clergy in all); and,

7 lay professionals and businessmen.

Of the seven new entrants from business and professional worlds, three were barristers, one came from a banking family, one was a former Poor Law Inspector and just one was a local industrialist: Joseph Whetstone (1799-1868), who owned two spinning mills, two coal mines and a brick works, and followed Thomas Stokes as Mayor of Leicester in 1839.¹⁷ In addition, Francis Paget of Birstall (b. 1840) came from a branch of the family who owned a small amount of land before 1830 as well as

¹⁷ Hartopp, *Mayors*, pp. 196-7.

banking and hosiery interests; he and other member of the Paget family show that wealth could be accumulated simultaneously from a variety of sources. It is also likely that among those of unknown origin were some whose wealth was newly made in commerce or the professions, and might explain why they none was mentioned in any directories of landed families.

The high number of clergymen was remarked upon by Bateman. He calculated that in Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire, around one in five of landowners among what he called the 'yeomen' with between 100 and 1,000 acres were clergy, twice the national average.¹⁸ This can be explained in Leicestershire by a strong association between the gentry and the church, including a tradition for the sons of gentry to enter the church and a high level of gentry patronage of some of the more lucrative livings, together with the effects of enclosure and tithe commutation in increasing the clergy's holdings.¹⁹

The favourable economic circumstances also enabled some individuals with incomes below £1,000 and with estates of just several hundred acres to become part of what is called here the 'sub-gentry'. By 1873, there were 47 landowners with incomes of between £750 and £1,000,

¹⁸ Bateman, p. 527. He said that the term 'yeomen' was a "makeshift title" which embraced people of differing circumstances.

¹⁹ See Chapter 8.

all of whom had less than 750 acres, and another 92 who derived between £500 and £750 from their land. All but two of the latter group had estates of under 500 acres. Below these 139 were the numerous owners of country houses and just a few hundred acres attached, and with lower incomes still from land, but who were recognised in contemporary directories as members of the gentry and served, for example, as county magistrates. The numbers of 'Seats of the Nobility, Gentry and Clergy' in local gazetteers rose over the years: 168 in one for 1846, of which 57 were rectories, and up to 219 by 1877.²⁰ Some of those listed were farmers and graziers rather than gentlemen without an occupation but served as magistrates.²¹ Walford also reflected the inflation in numbers: he listed 14 peers and 99 commoners under Leicestershire in the 1865 edition of his *County Families* and 21 peers and 142 commoners in 1875. Generalisation about this broad group is problematic. Some had been a part of the gentry or its fringes for several generations and newcomers whose motives varied.²² They were not all 'squires'. Something over a half were either closer to the quasi-gentry as defined by Habakkuk: business and professional men who bought country mansions with just 10-100 acres or so, but who did

²⁰ White's *Gazetteer* (1846, 1877).

²¹ See chapter 7.

²² They included Sir Mylles Cave-Browne-Cave, of a junior branch of the Cave family of Stanford, who owned 257 acres with a gross annual value of £457; John Coupland, a Liverpool merchant who was master of the Quorn Hunt from 1870-73, with 331 acres worth £546; Charles Hay Frewen, several times a parliamentary candidate and the younger brother of Thomas Frewen, who owned just 51 acres worth £347 (*ROL*).

not own "country estates in any accepted sense,"²³ or were farmers and graziers and were essentially what Bateman calls 'greater yeomen'.

Not everyone who bought property succeeded in maintaining their ambitions, and some purchases were short-lived: Richard Mitchell, a banker who bought Enderby Hall and other land in 1837 following the death of Charles Lorraine Smith MP, became bankrupted six years later in one of the periodic crises of early banking.²⁴ And Sir Richard Sutton, said to be "a very rich man who lived for foxhunting", whose principal seat was in Nottinghamshire, purchased Quorn Hall and Skeffington Hall after he became Master of the Quorn Hunt in 1847 but they were sold by his son following his death eight years later.²⁵ Such failures, or changes of heart among families, sustained the property market, however, and provided opportunities for the smaller-scale purchaser: Mitchell's and Sutton's estates were divided among more than one new buyer.

The findings appear to support the views of those historians, such as Rubinstein, who have argued that few businessmen, as opposed to

²³ Habakkuk, *Estates System*, p. 610.

²⁴ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp. 373-4 ; VCH, 3, p. 52. Thomas Paget bought the Lubenham estate.

²⁵ VCH, 3, p. 271; see also Ellis, *Quorn*, pp. 76-80 and C. W. Simpson, *Leicestershire and its Hunts* (1926), pp. 141-42. The purchaser of Skeffington, William Tailby, was a barrister and a leading huntsman, whose family earlier owned land in Humberstone. He was referred to by Trollope in a description of hunting in the midlands (*Phineas Finn*, (1869, Oxford edition, 1999), p. 214.

professionals and financiers, bought large amounts of land. But they do not endorse the view, expressed by Stone, for example, that landed society was a closed caste which was effectively shut to new money. More than a third of new entrants to the middling or lesser gentry - levels below those within the parameters set by Stone in *An Open Elite?* - came from business or the professions. Few were local industrialists, however, and it is possible to agree with Thirsk that businessmen tended to invest in other, more lucrative, enterprises than land.²⁶ Simmons noted that none of the main manufacturers in Leicester, in industries such as hosiery, was making a fortune on the scale of the ironmasters, shipbuilders or cotton merchants in other parts of the country.²⁷ Temple Patterson argued that men like William and John Biggs belonged to a "new type of businessman who did not do the squirearchy the compliment of imitation."²⁸ The differences between the manufacturer and the country gentlemen were therefore political and cultural as well as a reflection of their finances. Truly 'self-made' men who started from nothing and ended as country house-owning squires were rare. It was often the second generation members of an industrial family, such as Brook and Thwaites, who made the transition from industry into land, while still retaining active links with the businesses

²⁶ Thirsk, *VCH*, 2, p. 240.

²⁷ Jack Simmons, *Leicester Past and Present*, 2 vols., 1 *Ancient Borough to 1860* (1974), p. 160.

²⁸ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp. 323-24.

that were the source of their wealth. First generation professionals, such as bankers and lawyers, were however more likely to buy a moderately-sized estate, having acquired both the means and something of the style of a 'gentleman'.

At the end of the period Leicestershire remained a county characterised more by its 'squirearchy' than its great magnates. In this, it stood in contrast to both its smallest and its largest neighbours: in Rutland, three people – all peers – owned more than 10,000 acres and together held 42% of the county,²⁹ while in Lincolnshire, described by Olney as not "overwhelmingly aristocratic", 18 people had 10,000 acres or over, more than 18% of its 1,606,000 acres.³⁰ In Nottinghamshire, a county similar in size to Leicestershire, four peers and one commoner owned in excess of 10,000 acres each, accounting for just under 17% of its land. In contrast, two estates of more than 10,000 acres in Leicestershire amounted to under 8%. Based on Bateman's figures, Thompson calculated that a greater proportion of Leicestershire was held by the gentry, in estates between 1,000 and 10,000 acres, and by yeomen, with land of between 100 and 1,000 acres, than any of the seven

²⁹ Rutland's leading 10 landowners, four peers and six gentry, held 68% of the county (ROL).

³⁰ Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics*, p. 13; figures derived from individual listings in Bateman. Seven were peers and 11 gentry.

counties adjacent to it.³¹ However, some qualification must be made to this picture of the pattern of landownership in Leicestershire. Further analysis of the 1873 *Return* has confirmed it as a county of smaller estates; but it has also shown that even more land was owned by all sections of the gentry than suggested by Bateman, in modest amounts, more by peerage families in smaller portions, and less by the yeomen. A section of those described by Bateman as yeomen could more accurately be described as minor country gentlemen in the fringe and sub-gentry categories. He found 164 Greater Yeomen in the county, with 82,700 acres (15.9%), and 487 Lesser Yeomen, with 82,790 acres (15.9%). Some 61 of the former have been identified in 1873 as members of the fringe gentry and 40 in the sub-gentry. Thus, approximately 15% of the 651 people described as yeomen by Bateman, had a claim to be part of landed society, with modest country houses and serving in offices such as the magistracy.³² The figure for the gentry as a whole in the county rises therefore to 35%, compared with the 32% given by Bateman for great landowners and squires, and the 30% by Thompson. Leicestershire, with its numerous smaller country houses and estates, provided the openings for their aspirations.

³¹ For all gentry estates, between 1,000 and 10,000 acres, Leicestershire stood at 17th (30%), the same as Somerset, Wiltshire, Yorkshire and Bedfordshire and more than any of its seven neighbouring counties. The 32% of Leicestershire held by 'yeomen' compared with 28% in Warwickshire, 21% in Derbyshire, 19% in Nottinghamshire and 10% in Rutland (Thompson, *Landed Society*, pp. 32, 113-17).

³² Some 14 members of the sub-gentry group and nine of the fringe gentry were county justices in 1870, out of a total of 110 (see chapter 7).

The squeeze on the land held by yeomen, detected since the eighteenth century, had continued but to the benefit of the minor gentleman as much as the magnate. This was a manifestly less wealthy group which Bateman did not set out to identify, and as a result has sometimes since been overlooked by historians.

Magnates and Squires: The Wealth of the Mid-Victorian Gentry

During the second half of the period, a small number of multi-county magnates prospered greatly while a growing number of aspirant country gentlemen were able to earn more than £1,000 from well under 1,000 acres. The result was a larger body of gentry, with wide differences of wealth between them. For the main body of the gentry, the 1873 *Return* showed that the 60 with 1,000 acres or more each in Leicestershire owned a total of 130,836 acres, with a gross annual value of £240,563. This sum represented 17% of the total value of all the land in the county (£1,403,378) and 25.2% of its land area. All sections of the Leicestershire gentry benefitted from rising rental income; those with land in more than one county, with business interests, or who married heiresses, were able to advance their status considerably, while the favourable economic circumstances enabled those who bought estates of under 1,000 acres to secure a place on the

margins of landed society. But the gap between the richest and the mere 'squire' was wide, as the following table shows.

TABLE II: Incomes of the Leicestershire Gentry from land within the county in 1873

Gross Annual Income	Greater Gentry	Middling Gentry	Lesser Gentry
£10,000-£15,000	4		
£9,000-£10,000	1		
£8,000-£9,000	2		
£7,000-£8,000			
£6,000-£7,000		1	
£5,000-£6,000	2	2	
£4,000-£5,000	1	3	2
£3,000-£4,000		7	8
£2,000-£3,000		1	19
£1,000-£2,000			6
TOTAL GENTRY	10	14	35
TOTAL VALUE	£86,894	£57,927	£93,322
TOTAL ACRES	47,197	33,235	47,325
AVERAGE NO. OF ACRES	4,720	2,374	1,352
AVERAGE INCOME/RATE PER ACRE	£8,689/£1.84	£4,137/£1.74	£2,666/£1.97

Apart from the few estates in the far north eastern areas (five in the range of £1.39 to £1.73 per acre), an efficient estate in any part of the county could yield £2 or more, irrespective of size. Four of the greater gentry, all in the north of the county, exceeded that figure. The lesser gentry's estates, just over half of which were in the south of the county, appeared relatively more lucrative per acre; nine of the 35 earned more than £2 an acre, but the incomes of at least two were boosted to more

than £3 and £4 respectively by additional mining or industrial revenue. Just eight of the total number of 60 earned less than £1.50 an acre, spread across the county and at all levels; six were resident or had most of their property in other counties.

However, the gulf in total income between lower and upper levels is even more apparent if total land holdings in other parts of the country are taken into account. Bateman's figures provided the data for such a comparison. In his listing of the 57 gentry who owned some land in Leicestershire as part of an overall total of at least 2,000 acres nationally, 20 had under 1,000 acres in the county and 34 received less than half their gross income from it. Only eight had all their land in Leicestershire. When all their estates are taken into account, the picture of a wealthy gentry elite emerges:

TABLE III: The total incomes of Leicestershire gentry landowners with more than 2,000 acres nationally in 1873

Gross Annual Income	Number of Gentry (more than 50% in other counties)	Number of Gentry (more than 50% in Leicestershire)	Total
£30,000 and over	2		2
£20,000-£30,000	3	1	4
£15,000-£20,000	2	1	3
£10,000-£15,000	7	6	13
£9,000-£10,000	2		2
£8,000-£9,000	3		3
£7,000-£8,000	6		6
£6,000-£7,000	4	1	5
£5,000-£6,000	2	3	5
£4,000-£5,000	1	8	9
£3,000-£4,000	3	3	5
£2,000-£3,000			2
TOTAL NO. OF GENTRY	34	23	60
TOTAL INCOME	£409,665	£180,038	£597,848
AVERAGE INCOME	£12,049	£7,828	£9,964

Those who had most of their land elsewhere were wealthier on average than members of the gentry who held all or most of their estates in Leicestershire. A slightly higher proportion of those who had more land in other counties had total incomes above £10,000: 36.6% compared with 34.8% of those who had more than half their land in Leicestershire. Only one member of the gentry with all his land in Leicestershire had an income above £6,000: Ambrose March Phillipps de Lisle of Garendon

Park with £15,324. The leading two were Colonel Charles Kemeys-Tynte MP, of Somerset, who had an income of £37,566 from 20,679 acres across six counties, of which 699 were in Leicestershire, and Sir John Harpur Crewe of Calke Abbey in Derbyshire, with £36,966 from 28,056 acres in three counties, 877 of which were in Leicestershire. None of these, the wealthiest of the Leicestershire gentry, involved themselves in the county's formal public life and their disengagement opened up opportunities for the growing numbers of lesser and 'fringe' gentry. Given the high rates of return on land by the mid-Victorian period, an estate of between 520-580 acres might earn £1,000 a year.

Among those at the lower levels, the total income in 1873 from the Leicestershire estates of the 20 members of the lesser gentry who did not own more than 2,000 acres nationally, was £58,110, an average of £2,905. The differences within landed society are emphasised even more strongly when the nobility is taken into account. The total income of the 34 peers and members of peerage families who owned some land in Leicestershire and listed in Bateman was £948,479, in a range from £3,175 for General the Hon. Leicester Smyth, the seventh son of the 1st Earl Howe, to £97,486 for the Duke of Rutland. Only four of the peers had income from land of under £10,000 (11.8%), compared with 34 of the gentry (60.7%), and their average was £27,896, higher than all but

six of the gentry. But if the lesser gentry's incomes look modest in relation to the wealth of the greatest landowners, it should not be forgotten that they were still in the top 0.3% of national earnings in the mid-Victorian period and were markedly higher than most of the growing number of middle class businessmen and professionals. In 1867, only 4,290 people earned more than £5,000 a year and 25,200 between £1,000 and £5,000.³³ The mass of the working population, some 7,785,360 people, earned under £100 a year.

The wide range of the gentry's wealth is confirmed by the probate records of their cash assets.³⁴ In a sample of 24 heads of families who died between 1832 and 1875, the value of estates ranged from £1,500 to under £250,000. The estates of a 18 were under £50,000 and only one above £140,000: that of the newly-landed Yorkshire industrialist Charles Brook (1813-72). Towards the end of the century the number of high-value personal estates rose. In a sample of 14 individuals mentioned in the return of 1873, who died before 1898 (when unsettled land was included), nine were under £50,000 and five above £180,000. The highest sum recorded was up to £800,000 for William Perry Herrick (1799-1876). The level of personal wealth sometimes reflected the decline of a family: four generations of Cradock Hartopp baronets left

³³ Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp. 34, 42-47.

³⁴ TNA, *Probate Act Books and Death Duty Registers, 1832-58; Calendars of the Principal Probate Registry, 1858-98*

sums of under £70,000 in 1833, under £20,000 in 1849, under £40,000 in 1864 and £331 in 1888.

The land and property markets of the period illustrated the 'flux' of the gentry and were a measure of its wealth. Recent studies have suggested that there was no slackening of country house building in the Victorian period before the agricultural depression of the late 1870s. Girouard estimated that 500 houses were built or remodelled between 1835 and 1889, mostly before 1874.³⁵ The minimum cost of a new country house during this period was £7,000-£10,000, rising to £22,000 for the house of a great landowner.³⁶ Fewer members of older gentry families built houses, presumably because they already occupied a major seat that was deemed tolerable, while new entrants – if they did not purchase an existing house - built smaller ones. In Northamptonshire, for example, a county with a high concentration of major, aristocratic owners, only two country houses were built between 1850 and 1880, both on large estates.³⁷ As in earlier decades, Leicestershire saw relatively little major house building. The largest undertakings were carried out by established gentry families involved the re-building of Prestwold Hall by Charles Packe in the late 1830s, the re-construction of Beaumanor Park by William Herrick approximately 10

³⁵ *Victorian Country House* (1990), pp. 8-9.

³⁶ Jill Franklin *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan 1835-1914* (1981), p. 124, Wilson & Mackley, *Creating Paradise*, p. 294.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

years later at a cost of £37,0000, and, on a smaller scale, the building for Ambrose March Phillipps of Grace Dieu in the early 1830s.³⁸ Two aristocratic houses were built during those same decades: a new Hall at Swithland for the fourth Earl of Lanesborough in 1832 following a fire, and Keythorpe Hall, 10 miles east of Leicester, in the following decade, for Lord Berners.³⁹ The growth of the fringe and sub-gentry resulted in a greater number of smaller houses built, at Evington, Blaby and Burbage for example, and the renovation and modernisation of existing houses. At least 15 houses in the county were re-modelled, for essential repairs and restoration, to make stylistic adaptations to meet changing taste, and either to enlarge, or to make an older house more compact and habitable.⁴⁰ In about a third of them, work was prompted by a change of owner, either by purchase or the result of a transfer by marriage.

The nature of the land market facilitated the growth of the lesser and fringe gentry and provided opportunities for piecemeal expansion by

³⁸ Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, pp. 93-4; Franklin, *Country House*, p. 136; Cantor, *Country Houses*, pp. 34-5. Girouard, *Victorian Country House*, pp. 138-43, for Prestwold; Grace Dieu and Beaumanor were designed by William Railton (see also chapter 5). The initial estimate for the work at Beaumanor was £9,723 (Caroline Drinkall, *A brief history of Beaumanor Hall and Park* (Leicester, 1978), pp. 5-6; Caroline Wessel, *Portrait of Beaumanor* (Leicester, 1988), pp. 7, 137-8).

³⁹ Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, pp. 187, 402; Cantor, *Country Houses*, pp. 47, 69.

⁴⁰ Among them were Skeffington Hall, the Pochin's Barkby Hall, Shenton Hall of the Wollaston family, Dalby Hall, which belonged to Edward Hartopp, houses at Ashby Folville and Gaddesby restored by E. H. Cheney, and Lockington Hall, extensively altered by Nathaniel Curzon after 1872.

some established families. The estates of only one greater gentry family, Nevill of Holt, were sold in their entirety during this period, while the property of nine members of the middling and lesser gentry was sold. This meant that the multi-county magnates who ventured into Leicestershire also bought property in relatively modest amounts. At least a dozen major halls and mansions found new owners during these decades, and the late 1830s and 1840s were a prolific period in property sales as result of family and business failures.⁴¹ On the basis of the entries in the 1873 *Return* for families who did not own property in the county 40 years earlier, and what is known of the expansion of existing gentry, rising families and new entrants acquired up to 55,000 acres in the second half of the period and up to 25,000 acres was bought by newcomers at the fringe level. It came from the declining families and from farmers and smallholders and marked a shift in landownership away from 'yeomen' to an expanding lesser gentry and to wealthy landowners from outside the county. Land prices rose to reach 30 years' rental or more before the sharp falls in the late 1870s.⁴² Thus existing and aspirant gentry spent in the region of £3 million on the

⁴¹ In 1843, Peatling Hall (430 acres with the Hall plus another 1,150 acres in another 12 villages), Blaby Hall (150 acres), Enderby Hall (700 acres), Langton Hall (1,200 acres), Great Bowden (600 acres) and Lubenham (200 acres) in the south, and Langley Priory (1,030 acres), Birstall House (160 acres) and estates at New Parks (800 acres), were offered for sale (*LJ*, 7 July, 1 September, 1 December 1843).

⁴² Thompson, *Landed Society*, pp. 317-8.

purchase of land between 1830 and 1875.⁴³ There were however wide variations in the sums paid for individual properties. William Herrick paid the non-resident Jacomb Hood family just £45,00 for Bardon Park and 1,400 acres worth £1,800 a year, in 1864, 25 times its rental value.⁴⁴ A year later, Charles Brook bought Enderby Hall and 730 acres for £64,000.⁴⁵ In 1869, Thomas Whitmore bought the 595-acre Gumley estate for £46,815, which he financed by a mortgage. Of the larger estates, Nathaniel Curzon paid £190,000 for Lockington with 2,193 acres in 1872, 40 times its annual rental.⁴⁶ In 1876, Edward Cunard bought the 1,645-acre estate at Holt formerly owned by the Nevills for £105,000, 29 times its annual rental income of £3,600.⁴⁷

Foremost among the purchasers of land among existing gentry were the house-builders, William Perry Herrick and Charles Packe, and Thomas Frewen of Cold Overton and Brickwall in Sussex, and the three generations of Thomas Paget. The records of these four families showed they benefitted from rising rental income across the mid-century and made repeated purchases to add to and consolidate their estates. Inheritance played a vital part in shaping a family's standing and it

⁴³ This is a conservative estimate based on 80,000 acres bought at a rate of 25 times an annual rental of £1.50 per acre.

⁴⁴ ROLLR DE 2155/29, *Particulars and conditions of sale*, 13 July 1864, with a post-sale memorandum. Len Noble, *Bardon Park* (Leicester 1995) p. 193.

⁴⁵ *LJ*, 12 May, 9 June, 1865.

⁴⁶ *LJ*, 28 June 1872.

⁴⁷ *VCH*, 5, (1964) p. 245.

resources. The first three acquired land in more than one county, while continuing to make substantial purchases in Leicestershire. Like most multi-county landowners, Herrick, Packe and Paget, concentrated on one 'home' county in their public and political activity, in their case Leicestershire, and Frewen, who lived in Sussex from 1837, acted in the county through his brother and mother who remained at Cold Overton.⁴⁸

Following the inheritance of the Perry estates in Wales and the west midlands, which came to him when he was already 50 years old, Herrick propelled himself from the lesser gentry to become the county's second largest non-peerage landowner by 1870. Between 1850 and 1870, he made 70 separate land purchases in Leicestershire, mainly close to his seat at Beaumanor.⁴⁹ Over a 20 year period from 1855, Herrick calculated that he had spent £132,392.⁵⁰ This figure excludes one major acquisition outside the county, Penhow Castle in Wales, bought in 1861 and Bardon Park, mentioned above. He also sold £7,400 worth of land and property in small amounts from 1859-1874 to help fund his purchases. On succeeding his father Charles James Packe in 1837, Charles William Packe (1792-1867) bought Glen Hall and an 18 acre estate, in the south of the county, for £2,530, and 10 years later

⁴⁸ See below and chapter 7.

⁴⁹ Drinkall, *Beaumanor*, p. 19. This figure was derived from the number of conveyances listed in the indices to the Herrick papers in the ROLLR.

⁵⁰ ROLLR DE 10/2025. The total sum spent for which conveyances were listed was £129,969.

acquired nearby Stretton Hall for £30,000, financed by mortgage, from Sir George Robinson.⁵¹ His main undertaking however began in 1842, when he commissioned William Burn to re-design Prestwold Hall, and according to his own later account of his financial position, spent approximately £70,000 over the next 20 years on improvements and more land close to Prestwold.⁵² He also spent £12,000 on a house and 745 acres at Branksome in Dorset in 1852, using the same architect, and for which he borrowed £7,000. In addition he rented a house at Richmond Terrace for use during his time as a MP for South Leicestershire from 1835 until his death.⁵³ By the end of his life, he owned 2,464 acres in Leicestershire, worth £4,267 gross a year.⁵⁴ Packe also invested in bank stock, in government consols and owned £4,050 in railway shares in the mid-1840s. His brother George Hussey, the Deputy Chairman of the Great Northern Railway, also held £5,600 worth and were among a small number of Leicestershire gentry who subscribed £2,000 or more in railway stock at that time.⁵⁵ At his death, C. W. Packe's personal wealth was valued at up to £35,000. In

⁵¹ Heather MacDermid, *Halls, Houses &hovels – The Packes in Great Glen, Leicestershire* (Leicester, 2005), pp. 39, 49-50. Stretton Hall was occupied by C. W. Packe's nephew Charles Packe (1826-96).

⁵² ROLLR DE 1346/468, *Statement by C. W. Packe*, 1 October 1860.

⁵³ He took out a 35 year lease on 7, Richmond Terrace in 1843 for £500 a year. In 1864, he unsuccessfully tried to get the rent reduced to £400 (*LJ*, 11 Nov 1864).

⁵⁴ ROLLR DE 258/A/5, *Estate Rentals*, November 1867.

⁵⁵ *Return of Alphabetical List of Names of Persons subscribing to Railway Subscription Contracts deposited in Private Bill Office*, PP, cmd. 473 (1846). Sir Arthur Hazlerigg invested £6,000, and his brother, Grey, £6,750, with £62,500 from Sir John Cave-Browne-Cave of the fringe gentry. See also chapter 8.

contrast, Thomas Frewen did not enter into major house building or renovation projects but spent greatly on land. His main purchases were an additional 1,500 acres adjacent to Brickwall in Sussex for £45,000 and around £37,500 for an estate at Innishannon in County Cork in 1837.⁵⁶ In Leicestershire, he calculated that he had spent over £50,000, including expenditure on the acquisition of advowsons and on church building.⁵⁷

The Paget family adopted a different strategy to land acquisition. They concentrated on Leicestershire and built up their holdings gradually, buying small amounts of land in more than 20 different locations in Leicestershire, with just one elsewhere, at Great Oxendon, in Northamptonshire, purchased earlier in the century.⁵⁸ The family's continued rise was made possible when Thomas Paget (1778-1862) changed his will to pass the bulk of his wealth to his older son, Thomas Tertius (1807-1892), rather than sharing it with the younger, John (1811-1898), a barrister who worked as a stipendiary magistrate in London.⁵⁹ The result was that Thomas Tertius had a critical mass of

⁵⁶ His father had been an MP for Athlone from 1807-20.

⁵⁷ ESRO FRE/327, *Memorandum on additions to estates and property*, 1854.

⁵⁸ ROLLR DE365/387, 388, *Surveys of Land*, 1884-88.

⁵⁹ Under the revised will of 1861, Thomas inherited property with a capital value of £280,000 and £110,000 in cash while John received £30,000. The latter objected to the new terms, having previously been assured some property in a family not bound to old gentry traditions of strict settlement, and ceased to be on speaking terms with his brother (ROLLR DE 5770, *Statement by John Paget*); see also the *ODNB*, 42, p. 364, for John Paget.

wealth that enabled him to become the eighth largest non-peerage landowner in the county. Apart from a continuing interest in the bank, which was worth £6,550 a year at the time of his father's death,⁶⁰ he held railway shares and was also a partner with William Whetstone of Coalville in a coal and brick yard business. When this was dissolved in 1873, Thomas Tertius received £25,000 from Whetstone and a further sum of £50,000 to be paid over two years.⁶¹ Thomas senior had left the substantial sum of up to £140,000 in 1862 but on his death 30 years later Thomas Tertius had a personal wealth of £602,000, the second highest personal estate of any member of the Leicestershire gentry.⁶²

Gentry families had numerous demands on their wealth, as noted in the previous chapter. Many were unavoidable in meeting legal obligations to family members and maintaining property. Routinely these might include annuities and allowances for dependents, estate repairs and maintenance, educational fees, travel and entertainment, sport, solicitors' fees, salaries for land agents, and servants wages. Together these might account for several hundred pounds a year. A household might employ a butler, footmen, domestic and kitchen staff and

⁶⁰ ROLLR DE365/323, *A statement by Thomas Tertius Paget*, 9 May 1863, regarding his father's financial affairs.

⁶¹ DE365/319, *Agreement to dissolve the partnership*, 17 May 1873.

⁶² TNA PROB8/207, *Probate Act Books*; NA IR/26/621/690, *Death Duty Registers*, for the elder Thomas, and *Principal Probate Registry Calendar* for his son. John's Paget's personal wealth at his death was £97,632.

gardeners and employees on the home farm. In mid-century, between 10 and 20 servants appeared to have been common.⁶³ There were limits. Although the gentry supported hunting in large numbers, the full costs of maintaining a large stable of horse and a pack of hounds ran into several thousand pounds a season, and became a luxury which many were unwilling to bear, even in the county that was the centre of the sport.⁶⁴ In addition charitable donations and support for the church, as well as the costs of public office were a discretionary but central part of the duties and responsibilities of the country gentleman.⁶⁵

The extent to which nineteenth-century landholders were in debt is a much discussed subject.⁶⁶ Several leading Leicestershire families experienced some difficulty, which in some cases affected their ability to weather the more testing times towards the end of the century. In 1872, Ambrose de Lisle, who had spent heavily in advancing the cause

⁶³ Two members of Hazlerigg family at Noseley Hall had three servants; six Hartopps at Little Dalby had 19 servants including a governess; William Herrick and his sister employed 14 servants (5 male and 9 female) at Beaumanor Hall, while Captain Sir Alexander Dixie and his wife and daughter had 3 male and 8 female servants at Bosworth Hall. The Duke of Rutland had 68 servants (42 male and 26 female) at Belvoir Castle for a household of 28 people, including 11 visitors and a chaplain. Some of these servants no doubt worked for the guests. Such figures do not take into account the number of non-resident servants or casual employees. (NA HO/107, *Census Returns*, 1851).

⁶⁴ Thompson, p. 97, Carr, pp. 114-126

⁶⁵ Considered in Part Two.

⁶⁶ David Cannadine, 'Aristocratic indebtedness in the nineteenth century: the case reopened', *EconHR*, 30 (1977), pp. 624-50; David Spring, 'The English Landed Estate in the Age of Coal and iron 1830-1800', *Journal of Economic History*, XI, (1951), pp. 3-24 & F. M. L. Thompson, 'The End of a Great Estate', *EconHR*, 8 (1955-56), pp. 36-52.

of Catholicism in the county, borrowed £5,000 at a commercial rate of 4% interest from the staunch Anglican, William Perry Herrick – a case of gentry solidarity crossing religious divides to avoid public embarrassment.⁶⁷ In a letter to Herrick the following year, he offered a statement of his financial position: against incomings of £16,837, of which £14,337 came from the rents on his estates at Garendon and Grace Dieu, he had annual expenses of £13,044, including a mortgage of £8,628, a sinking fund set up to reduce estate costs and interest on mortgages and loans. This left with him with a balance of £3,793. Phillipps de Lisle thanked Perry Herrick for his “delicacy” in handling the matter of the loan.⁶⁸ It enabled him to circumvent the banking system and make a discreet arrangement between social equals, in the way, noted earlier, that Clement Winstanley had done when he borrowed money from John Frewen Turner in 1800. The finances of the latter’s son, Thomas Frewen (1811-70), were however in some disarray. He left Leicestershire in 1837 after standing down as a county MP on the grounds of ill health and went to live at his main Sussex property. His mother, Mrs Eleanor Frewen, who lived until 1879, and his younger brother, Charles Hay Frewen, remained at Cold Overton. To finance his purchase in Ireland he had borrowed £10,000 at 4% interest from his then infant son, John, through the boy’s trustees, his mother and the

⁶⁷ ROLLR DG9/172, *Mortgage Deed*, 1 Oct 1872. De Lisle’s collection of 72 old-master paintings were offered as security for the loan; see also Chapter 8.

⁶⁸ ROLLR DG9/1710, *Letter*, Ambrose de Lisle to William Herrick, 27 September 1873.

Reverend Samuel Hartopp.⁶⁹ He noted later however that it had become “impossible to put a value on any property in Ireland” but that a neighbouring estate of 1,200 acres – a third the size of his – had recently sold for £33,000.⁷⁰ The management of his finances – like those of other similar families - was complicated by the unstable nature of nineteenth century banking, with its plethora of small banks and periodic crises. Thomas Frewen moved money between his several accounts, in London at Glyn’s, at Pares Bank in Leicester, and between 1837 and the bank’s collapse six years later, with Clarke and Phillipps.⁷¹ In January 1852 Frewen noted that he hoped to clear his debts but had only received half the £5,200 he was owed in rents.⁷² Later that year he wrote that “I ought not to borrow more money” and admitted that his finances were “at sixes and sevens.”⁷³

C. W. Packe also faced financial problems from the outset. A mortgage of £17,000 taken out by his father in 1818 to help cover legacies to his widow and to each of the three youngest sons remained outstanding.⁷⁴

Under the burden of the debt and of successive family settlements,

⁶⁹ ESRO FRE/408, *Mortgage*, 2 February 1838. Thomas Frewen later noted on the mortgage document that the loan had been paid off when his son died. Hartopp was the Rector of Cold Overton, where the Hartopp family held the patronage at that time.

⁷⁰ ESRO FRE/327.

⁷¹ ESRO FRE/581. When the bank ceased trading, Thomas Frewen had £494 11s 1d in account with Clarke and Phillipps.

⁷² ESRO FRE/3332, *Draft letter* to an unnamed recipient, 29 Jan 1852.

⁷³ ESRO 3335, *Draft letter* to unnamed recipient, 16 April, 1852. It was probably intended for his solicitor, William Nason.

⁷⁴ ROLLR DE 1346/468.

Packe quarrelled with his brother and heir, George Hussey Packe, ostensibly over the sale of timber from Prestwold. Such sales provided a regular addition to the income of many landowners but George Packe alleged that they had exceeded a limit of £200 annually laid down in a settlement of 1821. In 1858, C. W. Packe decided he could no longer afford to maintain Prestwold and left for his recently acquired property in Dorset, Branksome Towers, allowing his Leicestershire house to fall into a state of dereliction. After his death eight years later, George Packe and his son, Hussey, sued Packe's widow and solicitor and took the case to the Court of Chancery. The judge found that the sale of timber had been wrong but rejected claim for damage to the house.⁷⁵ Branksome was subsequently sold, and the outstanding mortgage on Prestwold of £7,600 was paid off.⁷⁶ Following the death of George Packe in 1874, the estates passed to his son, Hussey, who had two years earlier had married Lady Alice Woodhouse the daughter of the 1st Earl of Kimberley, who brought with her £10,200.⁷⁷ This allowed more of the debts to be paid off, and for Packe to consolidate his Leicestershire holdings.

However stretched their finances were, few members of the gentry reached the point that their main estates were in jeopardy. Those who

⁷⁵ *LJ*, 29 April 1870.

⁷⁶ ROLLR, DE 5047/29, *Particulars of Sale*, 6 October 1870.

⁷⁷ ROLLR, DE 1346/446, *Marriage Settlement*, 12 August 1872.

lost everything, like the would-be gentlemen, Mitchell and Shuttleworth of Great Bowden, did so because of failure in the businesses which had provided the source of their capital. Collapse as a result of reckless extravagance remained rare: Sir Lumley Skeffington, the 4th Marquis of Hastings (1842-68), a Master of the Quorn Hunt,⁷⁸ and George Osbaldeston (1786-1866) were the most well-known examples in this period.⁷⁹ But the gentry were not always efficient or well-organised in managing their resources, which left them over-committed and led in a number of cases to disputes within the family. Many were ill-placed to face the depression which presaged the decline of the landed classes in the last quarter of the century.

⁷⁸ See *ODNB*, 25, pp. 762-3, and Ellis, *Quorn Hunt*, p. 88, for Hastings.

⁷⁹ *Squire Osbaldeston – His Autobiography* (1926 edition). Osbaldeston, an MP who was Master of the Quorn Hunt from 1817-21 and 1823-27 (Ellis, *Quorn Hunt*, p. 209). He reputedly lost £200,000 on the turf and was forced to sell his Yorkshire estates in 1848. He owned no property in Leicestershire.

PART TWO

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WORLD OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE

GENTRY

AND ITS NETWORKS

5. The Culture of the Gentry

In December 1793, Sir Nigel Gresley, a baronet who owned estates in north west Leicestershire and Derbyshire, held a masked ball at his seat, Drakelowe Hall. The *Leicester Journal* reported that it was attended by 180 “of the most fashionable of both sexes” and that “nothing could exceed the brilliance of the treat.”¹ It went on to say that “when the ladies cast aside their borrowed visages and displayed their natural charms, there appeared such an assemblage as has seldom graced a single house – a convincing proof of Sir Nigel’s refined taste for female beauty.” Whatever may be implied in the words of that report, the occasion stands in sharp distinction to the manner in which another Leicestershire gentleman spent one festive season. Five years later, John Frewen Turner passed Christmas Day at Cold Overton Hall reading two of Newton’s Dissertations and on New Year’s Eve noted in his diary that he hoped in the year ahead “to improve in Religion and Wisdom and as such become more happy.”²

The contrasting habits of these two country gentlemen at the end of the eighteenth century serve to illustrate the dangers of generalisation in discussing the culture and values of the gentry. As Habakkuk wrote,

¹ *LJ*, 27 December 1793

² ESRO, FRE/758, *Pocket Diary of John Frewen Turner*, 25 & 31 December 1798.

among the members of landed society were to be found “saints and sinners, profligates and misers, poets and philistines, ignorant backwoodsmen and sagacious statesmen, men locked in ancient routines as well as some of the most adventurous entrepreneurs of their age.”³ But it would be misleading to portray Frewen Turner as a paragon of reflective virtue against the frivolous Sir Nigel. As landowners with estates in more than one county, as members of complicated extended families and as public figures, they had many characteristics in common. Both, for example, were enthusiastic supporters of canal development and as such could be seen as active modernisers: on the day that he set out his spiritual agenda for future happiness, Frewen Turner attended a Navigation Committee meeting in Oakham and in 1796 Sir Nigel Gresley chaired a committee to link a canal from Staffordshire to Ashby-de-la-Zouch.⁴ Gresley later became the Recorder of Lichfield and his younger brother, William, was the Rector of Netherseale, the location of the Gresleys’ main Leicestershire property, and chaplain to the Leicestershire Militia.⁵ Frewen Turner, for his part, became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Leicestershire Yeomanry, was a magistrate, served as a High Sheriff and Deputy Lieutenant for the county and for thirteen years was an MP for the Irish seat of

³ Habakkuk, *Estates System*, Preface, p. x.

⁴ ESRO FRE/758, 31 December 1798; *LJ*, 16 September 1796

⁵ *LJ*, 23 October 1801, 20 February 1795.

Athlone.⁶ The culture of the gentry was, therefore, wide-ranging and diverse.

Part Two of this thesis examines this cultural world across the period. It takes an empirical but broad view of what constitutes 'culture'. It is taken here to consist not only of artistic and intellectual pursuits and achievements but the values and beliefs which provided the foundation of the gentry's ethics and morality and informed its engagement in public life and in positions of authority, and the traditions, customs and habits which shaped the social lives and the leisure activities of the gentry. All culture is also to some extent about communication: the manner in which ideas and values are absorbed and transmitted, and the forms through which culture is expressed, in, for example, art, architecture, music and literature, and the way it is formalised and represented in social rituals and institutions and through symbols of authority and status. Special attention is focused on these avenues of cultural expression and the networks of influence and connection through which they were maintained; these networks were essential in sustaining the gentry's sense of identity and its social standing.

⁶ Thorne, 3, pp. 842-3.

The various aspects of the gentry's culture and its associated networks will be considered in turn. This chapter will begin by setting out the fundamental characteristics of gentry culture and those areas more traditionally regarded as defining cultural activity, in the arts and social and leisure activities. Following chapters will focus on other areas of culture which were central to 'the making of a country gentleman' through education and marriage, and on its public and political life, including its engagement with the church.

The Cultural Foundations of the Gentry

The culture of the gentry combined a deeply-rooted code of morality and duty with a well-defined sense of its material own self-interest and the ability to express in material and symbolic ways its social status and authority. The public and private were fused in a world-view that was the product of its long history as a pivotal social group in local and national life. It was an unashamedly elite culture, which for much of the eighteenth century had exalted wealth and display. Its rules and its hierarchy encouraged a conservatism and custom that was tempered by a calculated responsiveness to change and a capacity, within limits, to adapt and renew and so ensure its survival as a social group.

Central to the gentry's ethos was its devotion to the Church of England. The church provided the gentry with the principles of both its private and public morality. As well as guiding the conduct of the gentleman in his personal and family life, the established Protestant church was regarded as a cornerstone of the nation's constitutional structure, alongside the Monarch, parliament and the rule of law as the guarantors of the rights and privileges of landowners as the ruling class. The effects of this attachment were found too in the gentry's attitudes to education and its paternalism; they will be considered variously throughout Part Two. Here it can be noted that the gentry's confidence in the place of the church in society was subject to several challenges over the period, which weakened its usefulness as a pillar of the gentry's authority. Reforms of church structure from the 1830s onwards tackled questions such as plurality and patronage, which had favoured landed incumbents, and the rise of non-conformity put large sections of the population of Leicestershire beyond the influence of both the established church and the landed classes. Various strands of Methodism and Baptism, which had no measurable support among the landed classes, enjoyed a strong following in urban areas, many of the industrial villages, especially in the north and west of the county, and in townships where there was no dominant landlord to guide and direct them towards

the established church.⁷ The apathy manifest in non-attendance at any place of worship and the rise of secularism further undermined the social and intellectual foundations of the church's authority.

Yet, despite these threats, only some of the great movements within Anglicanism during the period which sought to renew the life of the church, exercised an influence over the outlook and conduct of the county's gentry; others left them untouched or even hostile.⁸ The evangelical revival of the later eighteenth century and beyond found some enthusiastic adherents. John Frewen Turner and his wife were evangelical and the family continued along the same path, supporting church and school building for example, to the latter part of the period.⁹ Thomas Babington MP of Rothley was a friend of William Wilberforce and actively supported his campaigns against the slave trade.¹⁰ The later rise of the Oxford Movement had a less discernable effect. There was a distinct and voluble element in the gentry and the clergy which

⁷ Keith Snell, *Church and Chapel in the North Midlands: Religious Observance in the Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1981), D. M. Thompson, *The Churches and Society in Leicestershire 1851-1881*, University of Cambridge, PhD thesis (1969); Alan Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1972).

⁸ Geoffrey Brandwood, wrote that Victorian Leicestershire was not "at the cutting edge of debates about Anglican churchmanship." (*Bringing them to their knees – church-building and restoration in Leicestershire and Rutland 1800-1914* (Leicester, 2003) p. vii). Thompson, *Leicestershire*, argued that most Leicestershire clergy took a middle course in controversies about ritual (p. 245).

⁹ See chapters 4 & 8; Their son, Thomas Frewen married Anne Carus Wilson, from a Westmoreland landowning family; three of her brothers were evangelical clergymen (D. E. Lewin (ed.) *The Blackwell's Directory of Evangelical Biography* (Oxford, 1995), 1, pp. 204, 410) & ODNB, 59, pp. 664-5.

¹⁰ Terry Sheppard & Iain Whyte, *Rothley and the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (Leicester, 2007); see also chapter 7.

emphasised the Church's Protestant identity and opposed Tractarianism as much as a re-awakened Roman Catholicism.¹¹ Catholicism retained a small number of adherents among the Leicestershire gentry over many generations, such as the Neville, Turville and Eyre families, and although it was given new impetus by the convert, Ambrose March Phillipps de Lisle of Garendon (1809-1878), who became one of England's leading lay Catholic campaigners, it found no new adherents in Leicestershire landed society.¹²

The public culture of the gentry, with its commitment to the established institutions of state, exemplified its conservatism. In secular politics, while it was never reactionary in the manner of some continental equivalents,¹³ it shrank in horror from radicalism and democracy; it however could respond to some demands for modernisation and adjustment. This balancing act, with its inherent tilt towards preserving the status quo, led to a certain ambivalence. Opposition to parliamentary reform and the repeal of the corn laws was fervent, but not unanimous. Many gentlemen supported canal building and, later, railway development, but not all and only after some debate. While

¹¹ Tractarian influence was mainly confined to the county town and initially stimulated opposition from evangelical and broad churchmen (Gerald Rimmington, 'Early Victorian Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire', *Midland History*, 27 (2002), pp. 108). See also, chapter 8.

¹² See below.

¹³ See David Spring (ed.) *European Landed Elites in the Nineteenth century* (Baltimore, 1977)

many opposed the slave trade on ethical grounds, some argued for the maintenance of 'benevolent' servitude in the best interests of the slaves. The vast majority of gentry magistrates supported the creation of a county police force, but initially on the smallest possible scale. In intellectual pursuits they did not follow fashion. Many of the more progressive aspects of the successive "isms" of the age - Romanticism, Utilitarianism and Liberalism – passed them by, where they were not explicitly rejected. If the Leicestershire gentry did not contribute greatly to theological or philosophical debate, as later chapters will show, many of its members did participate to the day-to-day public life of the county.

The culture of the gentry was the expression of an elite, led by the nobility. The cream of the aristocracy had greater wealth and exercised more political power. They built and owned the grander houses, possessed the more valuable and impressive collections of art, entertained more lavishly and spread their patronage more widely. They set the tone of polite society, in taste and fashion, from literature and music to styles of dress and furniture. Their presence – and influence – was ubiquitous: they owned houses in London as well as their country seats, visited Bath, Harrogate and Tunbridge Wells, increasingly toured the wilder regions of Britain and derived income

from land in several counties. The gentry imitated many aspects of this essentially aristocratic culture and adapted them to their own needs and to a level that was within their means; the evidence of ruinous extravagance by only a few individuals demonstrated that most succeeded in containing their whims and fancies. They did not, in large numbers, pull down their classical mansions and rebuild them in fashionable neo-Gothic or Jacobean styles - they could not afford to - though a handful made an effort in partial or complete reconstructions or by re-shaping facades. In their art collections, the works of 'old masters' featured most prominently alongside family portraits, leavened by the addition of sporting pictures by contemporary and sometimes local artists. And while their libraries were full - some with many hundreds of volumes - they reflected conservative tastes, and largely contained religious works and the classics of pre-nineteenth century English literature supplemented by county and antiquarian histories, Latin texts, travel books and studies of natural history.

By the close of the eighteenth significant changes were taking place in the culture of landed society and its relationship to other social groups. In a time of war and conflict, and in tune with the mood of evangelicalism, the earlier extravagance and conspicuous consumption led by the aristocracy was giving way to a more sober assessment of its

place in society. At the same time, it has been argued that this sense of renewal enabled the landed classes to evolve into a more confident, cohesive (and British) elite.¹⁴ They were more dedicated to public service and in some cases, more ready to embrace the entrepreneurial opportunities in mining or the development of canals. Outward show became progressively less important in defining the 'gentleman' than the cultivation of an inner moral worth expressed in public duty. This mode of thought and conduct found its highest expression in the mid-Victorian period, in the classically-educated product of public school and Oxbridge, the land-owning pillar of county society who was also a servant of state and empire. But by the final quarter of the century, after decades of prosperity, their economic pre-eminence became threatened and their cultural assumptions as well as their social dominance challenged by an imperial plutocracy of *nouveaux riches* bankers, merchants and industrialists, by an articulate and politically-empowered middle class and by the putative forces of mass democracy in an industrial and urbanised workforce.

¹⁴ See Colley, *Britons*, pp. 155-93.

The Cultural World of the Leicestershire Gentry

In 1811, John Nichols published the second part of the fourth and final volume of his *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, sixteen years after the appearance of the opening volume. In it, he listed the names of some 236 patrons, from the King, to 19 peers, 18 baronets, and 15 libraries and national cultural and antiquarian institutions. Among the names of landowners, lawyers, clergymen and booksellers from London as well as Leicestershire were 30 or so members of the county's gentry. Only six of the 14 who made up the greater gentry appeared in the list, but some leading families had supported the enterprise from its inception. Joseph Cradock of Gumley, whose cousin was Nichols' first wife, and William Herrick of Beaumanor, corresponded extensively with him and entertained him on his visits to Leicestershire to gather material, while others, such as Charles James Packe, Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp and John Frewen Turner, and members of the Cave and Ashby families, had corresponded with him about the project.¹⁵ In 1808, when fire destroyed much of Nichols' printing works and his stock, prominent figures in the county rallied to his support: during Leicester Races - a major annual gathering for both town and country - Walter Ruding of Westcotes lobbied those present and

¹⁵ NAD/1957, NAD/4790, *Letters*, John Nichols to John Bowyer Nichols & William Herrick, 1817.

gathered together contributions of five guineas each from 30 or so peers and gentlemen.¹⁶ Among the patrons of the 1811 volume was Ruding's brother, Rogers Ruding, the Vicar of Malden in Surrey, a noted numismatist and one of 59 Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries, among whom were seven members of the Leicestershire gentry, as well as the Society itself, who were listed as supporters. The book's compilation would not have been possible without the nurturing and use of the networks both within and beyond the county gentry.

The realisation of Nichols' *History* reveals much about the culture of the gentry: it was not an isolated culture of localism, but was subject to influences from outside the county and was disseminated through a range of social and professional networks, in specialist institutions, informal gatherings and through the written and spoken word. Members of the gentry encouraged Nichols for numerous reasons: the book, with its pedigrees and plates of their country seats, attested to their social and economic status, encapsulated through its antiquarian collection of documents and histories their sense of identity which had evolved through many generations, defined their sphere of geographic and administrative influence, and, quite simply, flattered their own (and might stimulate others') perceptions of their importance. The complete

¹⁶ *LJ*, 14 October 1808; *Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1808, p. 1872; Nichols, 4, part 2, pp. v-vi.

work was also itself a desirable possession: impressively large and lavishly presented, the four volumes were objects to be displayed and admired. Its production was a happy marriage of culture and consumption and marked a high point in the dignity of the county and its elite before the challenges of later decades. Thus, the assembling of a county history, which was encouraged by local landed society, was not an enterprise that was itself bound by county boundaries or confined to one social group: the work of compiling, funding and producing it had a metropolitan base and urban and professional dimensions. While members of the gentry had contributed significantly to its success, it was not theirs or even the county's alone. The cultural world of the Leicestershire gentry had an urban and metropolitan context and was subject to cosmopolitan influences, beyond the home territory of its country estates. As will be shown, from the end of the eighteenth century, the gentry's relationship with these wider arenas and with the other social groups who inhabited them changed.

The cultural concerns of the gentry were also channelled through several related but distinct spheres which were the bedrock of landed society itself: first, through the family and its possessions, with the object of securing and maintaining its status from generation to generation; secondly, in the community of similar families, in the geographic county

and beyond, with whom the members of the gentry were linked by marriage, education and a mutual economic and political self-interest; and, thirdly, through the representation of those interests and values in political and public life. It is argued that within each of these spheres, the culture of the gentry was developed and sustained through a series of networks - patterns and structures of connection between individuals and groups - in private as well as in public life. These networks were the means through which the gentry maintained its cultural values and interests. They grew out of eighteenth century notions of 'interest' and a social and political system which was founded on connection and obligation. These networks were however both formal and informal and more diffused. They became in some respects wider during the nineteenth century than previously and helped sustain the influence of the gentry in society into the Victorian age. Their extent and depth partly explain why values associated with the gentry and the landed interest generally appeared to retain a degree of influence in certain areas when its formal political power was falling away and its former certainties were being challenged by new ideas and interests. As well as kinship and the mutual sense of self-interest, they could be based on an institution, a location, or shared beliefs or concerns.¹⁷

Some networks derived from inescapable obligations, especially in

¹⁷ Vickery, in *The Gentleman's Daughter*, wrote of the "correspondence networks" of women in gentry, professional and merchant families in northern England in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries (p. 11).

matters related to the family and its estates, to which the responsible head of a gentry family was often legally bound. Others, in public and political life, also demanded a sense of duty, mixed with a personal disposition to participate. Finally, some networks were ones of choice, which were entered into because of personal talents, priorities and inclinations, among which were those associated with artistic and intellectual pursuits, and some of the more prosaic pastimes and rituals of landed society, such as hunting and entertainment. The range of networks through which an active country gentlemen might conduct his social and cultural life are set out in diagrammatic form at Appendix VI.

That the cultural identity of the gentry was therefore not exclusively its own property, nor was entirely local, was a source of its weakness as well as its strength. It provided for some diversity in the content and scope of the gentry's culture but weakened its core identity; as a group it could not be clearly delineated or described in terms of a unique culture. A resurgent nobility were the leaders of landed society nationally. The plutocratic *nouveaux riches* were stamping their mark on taste and style (or displaying, through sheer spending power, their vulgar excess).¹⁸ Middle class culture in the towns and cities was developing rapidly with its own mores, arenas and networks. The

¹⁸ See J. Mordaunt Cook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches* (1999).

squirearchy was left somewhere between them, with a cultural identity increasingly dimmed by the brilliant lights of others.

As a measure of its predicament, it can be noted how few members of the Leicestershire gentry achieved prominence as cultural figures on a national stage. Nichol's main Leicestershire correspondent, Joseph Cradock, travelled in France and the Low Countries from 1783-86 and was a playwright who moved in London literary circles as well as the upper echelons of metropolitan society.¹⁹ Despite the preoccupations of his London life, Cradock found time to combine with that of a country gentleman, developing the gardens at Gumley, setting up a theatre in the house, serving as High Sheriff for the county in 1767 and supporting the Leicester Infirmary. His friend and contemporary, Sir George Beaumont (1753-1827), also, in successive phases of his life, fulfilled this dual role.²⁰ An amateur painter and close friend of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, he cultivated young artists and spent much of his time in London. He helped found the National Gallery, to which he donated 16 works from his own art collection, some of which he had acquired during visits to Italy, and was a trustee of the British Museum. He did not visit his Leicestershire property at Coleorton until 1803 but subsequently rebuilt it in the Gothic style, with a winter garden designed

¹⁹ *ODNB*, 13, pp. 917-8.

²⁰ For Beaumont, see William Knight, (ed), *Memorials of Coleorton*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1887); Owen & Brown, *Genius*; *ODNB*.

by Wordsworth; Constable was among later visitors. Sir Henry Halford's London connections were based above all on his medical practice, but his success has been credited less to his scientific skill than to his good manners and the cultivation of his aristocratic clients; the Dukes of Rutland and Wellington became close friends and he corresponded with numerous others.²¹ A classicist who wrote Latin verse, Halford exploited the qualities of a 'gentlemen' to the full and immersed himself in refined metropolitan society.

Among the generation which followed Beaumont and Cradock, very few members of the Leicestershire gentry achieved such reputations. One was the largest gentry landowner in the county, the Roman Catholic campaigner, Ambrose March Phillipps de Lisle. Although he chose to live in Leicestershire, he relied upon a network of sympathetic and influential allies, among the country's leading Catholic families and as a result of his two visits to Rome.²² In 1835 he purchased 230 acres in Charnwood Forest for the construction of a Cistercian monastery. At various times, he flirted with politics and was part of the Young England

²¹ Munk, *Halford*, pp. 196-237; *ODNB*, 24, pp. 565-7.

²² See, *ODNB*, 33, pp. 961-3; Pawley, *Faith and Family*; E. S. Purcell, *Life and letters of Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle*, 2 vols, (1900); B. Elliott, 'Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle 1809-78', *TLAHS*, 55, 1979-80, pp. 78-81 and Rosemary Hill's biography of Pugin, *God's Architect* (2007). Pugin designed extensions to Phillipps' house.

movement led by Lord John Manners in the 1840s.²³ In 1868 de Lisle established a friendship with William Gladstone, who visited Garendon in 1873 while Prime Minister. The relative lack of high level cultural or intellectual achievement by other leading members of the mid-Victorian Leicestershire gentry is further highlighted by comparison with others who were connected to them. The historian Lord (Thomas Babington) Macaulay, was the nephew of Thomas Babington, MP and was born at Rothley. The three sons of Thomas Dicey of Claybrooke Hall (c. 1789-1858) achieved distinction in particular fields: Henry, who succeeded to the Hall, as a barrister, Edward as the Editor of the *Observer* newspaper from 1870-89 and Professor A. V. Dicey, the distinguished legal theorist.²⁴ Their careers illustrate the successes of some landed families in entering professional worlds, working in highly specialised areas and centred on London or elsewhere outside Leicestershire.²⁵ But it was a more competitive world in which it was less easy for the amateur to flourish.

Against this background, the place of the gentry in its former urban and metropolitan spheres of activity was also changing. London lost none of its allure for those who wanted access to power and influence at the

²³ He was portrayed as Eustace Lyle, a Roman Catholic philanthropist, in Benjamin Disraeli's novel, *Coningsby*.

²⁴ *ODNB*, 16, pp. 43-5 & 45-6.

²⁵ See chapter 8.

highest levels, or a stage on which to parade their wealth. But the mere country gentleman however had increasing difficulty in competing in a rarefied world inhabited by those who did not share their traditions and codes of behaviour. The cost of participating fully in the rituals of the 'season', became more expensive and only the wealthiest of the gentry could stand alongside the aristocracy and financial or business magnates. While some public events, such as concerts or entertainments became more open, exclusivity was heightened for private functions to which a mere 'squire' from the lesser or fringe might not gain access without the right personal introductions.²⁶ Relatively few Leicestershire gentry families appear to have had a London home at any point in the nineteenth century. Those who did included some of its MPs, and were generally found in the Mayfair, St James's and Belgravia areas, where nobility, parliamentarians, foreign diplomats and the wealthy of whatever background had their homes.²⁷ For the few, the facility of a London house, rented or owned, provided additional opportunities to widen social contacts and for access to yet grander social events at which women might also shine: the attendance at royal levees of the wife and daughters of Charles Packe MP, who rented a

²⁶ See L. Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (1973).

²⁷ Members of Parliament were most likely to have a London residence. In 1803, Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp lived in Sackville Street, Mayfair, where his neighbours included the Earl of Liverpool and Lord Hawkesbury. In 1832, MPs Lord Robert Manners and Sir Charles Abney-Hastings also had addresses in Sackville Street (*Register of Both Houses of Parliament*). A few hundred yards away along Piccadilly, lay Clarges Street, where in 1800 Charles Boothby Clopton, committed suicide; one of his neighbours was the royal physician, Sir Henry Hallford (Munk, *Halford*, pp. 26-7).

house in Richmond Terrace, was reported by the *Leicester Journal* on several occasions, and their clothes described in great detail.²⁸ By the second half of the nineteenth century, the gentry were however more likely to belong to a London club, which provided accommodation and a meeting place without the expense of maintaining a house.²⁹ Of 22 men who owned 1,000 acres in Leicestershire at the end of the period, and had at least 3,000 in total, 17 were listed in Bateman as members of a London club, including all the members of the Leicestershire greater gentry. Ten were members of more than one club; eight belonged to the leading Conservative institution, the Carlton.³⁰

In the borough of Leicester, the local aristocracy and gentry had earlier been involved in numerous innovations. Together, they had supported the establishment of an Infirmary in the 1770s and continued to provide it with donations and its Trustees throughout the nineteenth century.³¹ They subscribed also to the building of new Assembly Rooms in 1800, which they used for charity balls and for subscription concerts and were

²⁸ In 1850, Mrs Hussey Packe, Jane Packe and Miss Burnaby were presented to the Queen Victoria in her Drawing Room (*LJ*, 28 June 1850).

²⁹ Gash identified 1832 to 1867 as the "golden age" of the political club. The Athenaeum was founded in the 1824, shortly after the Travellers' and the United Services and Carlton and the Reform in the 1830s (*Politics in the Age of Peel* (1953), p. 393).

³⁰ Compiled from Bateman. The greater gentry members exclude William Herrick, whose widow is listed in Bateman, following his death in 1876.

³¹ From its foundation the President of the Infirmary came from the aristocracy, as did most Vice Presidents. The Trustees were mainly drawn from the gentry (Frizelle & Martin, *Royal Infirmary*, pp. 233-4).

closely involved in Leicester's musical life.³² They frequented the annual Leicester Races and its associated ball and social events. Members of the gentry joined political clubs based in the borough and until the reform of municipal government in 1835, they had also, for example, attended each autumn the annual dinner for the new Mayor, a lavish and convivial occasion which the incoming radicals abandoned.

From that decade, a political gulf opened up between town and county, and the linkages between landed gentry and urban middle classes diminished.³³ The relationship between the county gentry and the cultural life of the town became at best ambivalent and in many respects non-existent. Few gentry appeared to play any conspicuous part in developments such as the establishment of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, which was founded in 1835, although C. W. Packe was President of the Loughborough Society in 1849. The musical life of the town, or at least that part of it which had drawn in the sponsorship and support of the gentry, declined. In reality the town was developing its own identity led by men of very different values and background. In part this divergence was a product of the rise of the

³² See below.

³³ See chapter 7. The Freemasons were an exception, and included townsmen and members of the gentry in their membership. Among the Masters of St John's Lodge, founded in 1790, were George Pochin (1824) and Sir Francis Fowke (1827-8). (List of Members, in W. M. Williams, *The Centenary Celebrations of St John's Lodge* (Leicester, 1891) p. 163-76).

'urban gentry.' In numerous town and cities, it had emerged as the counterpart of the landed gentry from the end of the seventeenth century. It had developed its own forms of association and entertainment, and stimulating new demand for luxury goods and services.³⁴ By the mid-nineteenth century, it was possible to speak of an urban middle class culture, with its own values, forms and structures, independent of those of the landed gentry.³⁵ In Leicester, the twentieth largest town in England in 1801, some of these developments emerged slowly. It lacked a significant population of resident gentry and had fallen behind other towns in the provision of social and cultural amenities.³⁶ The seeds of a breach were laid earlier despite the evident participation in some areas. As Grewcock noted in his study of Leicester's social and intellectual life between 1763 and 1835, apart from Joseph Cradock, "very few examples may otherwise be found of intellectual achievement on the part of the gentry which had any direct effect upon the county town."³⁷ Other recent research has reinforced this view. In her work on Victorian county towns after 1860, McHugh found that: "Gentry interests had withdrawn from the regional town

³⁴ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1997); Sweet, *English Town*, and Paul Langford, *Polite and Commercial People - England 1722-1783* (Oxford, 1989)

³⁵ Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000). He noted, for example, complex networks of non-conformist ministry that extended from cities and regions across the nation as a whole (pp. 106-8).

³⁶ Townsend, *Town, Country and Region*, p. 123.

³⁷ Craig Grewcock, *Social and Intellectual Life in Leicester 1763-1835*, University of Leicester (1973), MA dissertation, p. 84.

centres and had refocused both their political expenditure on the country house network and the metropolis."³⁸

The natural habitat of the gentry, and the foundation of the principal networks of landed society, remained however the 'county community.' This represented the collective expression of the gentry's wealth and status, which were founded in the ownership of land in the geographic county, and provided a forum for the social and political activity of the gentry. It was both an institutional framework through which the gentry could exercise its authority and an informal arena for the expression of shared values and culture. The nature of the county community and the gentry's place within it varied widely from period to period and place to place. Its role has been widely debated. Acheson, for example, wrote of a 'gentry community' in Leicestershire in the fifteenth century in which the gentry were the major players in the county's affairs in the absence of a dominant aristocracy.³⁹ In the civil war of the seventeenth century, the Leicestershire gentry was a divided community, and fell under the leadership of rival aristocratic camps.⁴⁰ Its identification with the county was however at its height. Everitt has attributed this to the

³⁸ Denise McHugh, *Remaking the Victorian County Town 1860-1910*, University of Leicester, PhD thesis (2002).

³⁹ Acheson, p. 202. Among others, Christine Carpenter has contested the notion of such a community in the medieval period, ('Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *JBS*, 53 (1994), pp. 340-80).

⁴⁰ David Fleming, 'Faction and Civil War in Leicester', *TLAHS*, 57 (1981-82), pp. 26-36.

development of county institutions and administration, the expanding wealth of the gentry and its tendency to inter-marry within the county, the growing interest in local history and customs and the growth of county towns. He argued that "allegiance of the provincial gentry to the community of their local shire is one of the basic facts of English history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."⁴¹ Local concerns were more important in deciding the allegiance of the gentry in the civil war than national questions. This view has however been challenged.⁴² Carpenter has also criticised the widespread over-use of the term 'community' and as an alternative, emphasised the importance of multi-faceted networks, some local and some extending more widely, socially and geographically. She placed the institutions of the county through which the elite worked within the context of national government and argued they were impositions from the centre rather than the products of local, organic growth.⁴³

During the eighteenth century the relationship between local and the national, and the character of the county community itself changed. The gentry's social and cultural dimensions were broadened to embrace

⁴¹ Alan Everitt, *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion* (1969), p. 5; Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces* (1999 edition).

⁴² Clive Holmes, 'The County Community in Stuart Historiography', *JBS*, 19 (1990), pp. 54-73; Glenn Burgess, 'On Revisionism: An Analysis of Early Stuart Historiography in the 1970s and 1980s', *The Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), pp. 609-627, and Ann Hughes, 'Warwickshire on the Eve of the Civil War: a 'County Community'?' *Midland History*, 7 (1982), pp. 42-72.

⁴³ Carpenter, *Gentry and Community*, pp. 375-6.

national currents and taste, while the legal and structural framework was increasingly determined by central government and by concerns of national interest.⁴⁴ Langford implied a loosening of the connection between the county community and a specific place. For him, "the county was a group of people rather than a physical location."⁴⁵ It was a "mobile community" whose members met in Bath or London or elsewhere and not merely in their home county. In other words, the county was not just a geographic or administrative unit, but a description of a section of society which was found in any number of counties and joined together by common interests, status and culture. But, essentially the county remained central in the lives of the gentry to the turn of the century and beyond as the vehicle through which the will of the state was enforced and as a social forum. As Sweet wrote, while there was a greater ease of travel and communications, and despite the lure of London and the growth of a national consciousness, the county was "the major locus of local administration" for England; politics was conducted within a county framework, societies for the promotion of agriculture and social or moral reform, were based on the county, and there was "a strong sense of county feeling among the landed elite," which manifested itself in the writing of county histories.⁴⁶ Eastwood argued that the physical county retained meaning because it was "the

⁴⁴ See Brewer, *Sinews of Power* and Colley, *Britons*.

⁴⁵ Langford, *Propertied Englishman*.

⁴⁶ Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 37.

power base of the English gentry," whose estates were more likely than those of the aristocracy to be concentrated in just one county.⁴⁷

The foundations of the 'county community' shifted further from the 1830s. As noted previously, the existence of wealthy landowners who owned estates in several counties was breaking the ancient link between the single county and land ownership as the foundation of the gentry's identity, while many among the increased numbers of newcomers at the lesser levels did not have the same sense of connection or loyalty to the county and its people. The division of the county into two parliamentary constituencies after 1832 - so that the Knight of the Shire represented just half of it - and the subsequent loosening of the gentry's hold on representation at Westminster further undermined the linkage between the gentry and the concept of the 'county community'. As Eastwood noted, by mid-century the traditions of rural self-government had become eroded by developments such as the reform of the poor law and of municipal government.⁴⁸ Numerous other factors combined to broaden the range of experience available to members of the gentry beyond the county. Transport was becoming easier and faster. There was an increase in marriage with families outside the county, a more thorough and extended education at public school, experiences of travel

⁴⁷ David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 1997), p. 91.

⁴⁸ Eastwood, *Governing Rural England 1780-1840* (1999).

differed and older as well as younger sons had an increased exposure to professions and business. There was also an increased awareness that a community of interest existed with landed families throughout the country. But it was also possible for the local gentleman to be exposed to metropolitan values without setting foot outside Leicestershire. The fashionable and the rich who descended on Leicestershire for the hunting season brought Mayfair to Melton Mowbray. The world of the gentry had evolved into something that could not be adequately described as a discrete 'county community' but was rather a network of landed families in a nationwide 'county society,' which possessed its own gradations of status and influence.

While some of the gentry looked outwards, other responded to the challenges of the time by re-enforcing their attachment to the old certainties, and such roles as justice and sheriff. These positions provided an anchor and offered some residual status and power. The framework for exercising this authority remained the county. In appearance, the 'county community' thus continued and its institutions remained the focus of much of the gentry's routine public and social life. Adherence to the traditional and the familiar exposed, however, the underlying weakness of the culture of the gentry. Although the standing of the 'squirearchy' was undermined because it was overtaken

economically by the aristocracy, the plutocracy and the most successful businessmen, and because parliamentary and local government reforms took away swathes of its local power, the nature of its culture made it more vulnerable. It was a culture based on tradition and obligation and was bound by rules and long-observed standards of conduct which inhibited a radical response to its predicament. Obligation stood in the way of choice and flexibility and turned private decisions into questions of wider social consequence. Education, marriage, the choice of profession for a younger son, or a gentleman's decision whether to spend his resources and his days overseeing his estates and refurbishing his property, on extended travel overseas or engaged in public duty on the magisterial bench or in parliament, were public as well as personal matters. The self-made industrialist or lawyer was not faced with the same potentially conflicting demands between personal inclination and a pervading sense of duty. The burdens of maintaining property intact and legal structures such as strict settlement further imposed limits on the gentry's room for manoeuvre. The ancient gentry family with substantial estates and a large family could sometimes only with difficulty tailor its resources to its commitments; the responsibilities of the head of the family as a 'tenant for life,' and the necessary annuities, jointures and portions, were an inescapable part of the fabric of continuity.

In other aspects of cultural life, in the accumulation of its possessions, the material and symbolic expressions of its status and in the range of its experiences, the gentry was subject to a variety of influences and constraints. Decisions about which artist to commission for a family portrait, or which piece of Italian art or furniture to purchase, were made not in isolation or as purely personal matters. Art and book collections and other objects were social statements as much as sources of private pleasure. Similar criteria might apply also to items such as furniture, silver and porcelain, clothes or carriages. In building up a collection of art, or undertaking a major capital project such as the rebuilding of a house, the gentleman might take into account a host of views. Beginning with his own insights based on his own education and travels, the process might involve his wife and family, and extend to what he had read in the *Gentleman's Magazine* or in Nichols or Throsby, noting the opinions of his neighbours or those whose judgement he valued, former university colleagues or his associates in a learned body, or the architect he had commissioned, the artists he patronised and specialist dealers. Such networks were integral to the gentry's processes of cultural consumption. Figures such as Sir George Beaumont and Ambrose de Lisle sought out and responded to influences from outside the ranks of the county gentry. But for the less assured, and those at the lower levels who had to deploy their resources more

carefully, the pressures of so many potentially competing influences in a society where so much depended on approval and custom conspired to reinforce their conservatism.

A lack of ambition and dynamism among the gentry may be detected in several areas of its cultural life. House building served both as an indicator of prosperity and as a barometer of changing taste. Yet, as noted previously, only six members of the gentry with more than 1,000 acres in Leicestershire built new houses or re-built existing ones during the period, while at least 23 remodelled or altered them in varying degrees. Of the new or completely re-built houses, three followed the prevalent fashion for gothic or English-historical design and three adhered to a more traditional, classical approach. Coleorton, built for Sir George Beaumont in the first decade of the nineteenth century, was influenced by neo-gothic style, Grace Dieu was designed in a Tudor-gothic fashion and Beaumanor in neo-Jacobean.⁴⁹ The other three, Barkby Hall and Whatton House in the early nineteenth century, and Prestwold Hall in the 1840s, retained a more classical or Italianate appearance.⁵⁰ Throsby, writing in 1790, acknowledged that seats were “the dwellings of the rich and opulent; and the pride and ornament of

⁴⁹ Pevsner, *Leicestershire*, p. 93; Franklin, *Country House*, p. 136; Grace Dieu and Beaumanor were designed by William Railton, who was also responsible for Nelson’s Column in Trafalgar Square. (*ODNB*, 45, p. 809).

⁵⁰ Girouard, *Victorian Country House*, pp. 138-43

nations," but he was casually dismissive of some of the gentry's houses: he described the front view of Clement Winstanley's Braunstone Hall as "plain"; of Carlton Hall, which belonged to Sir John Palmer, he wrote there was "nothing about this house very striking" and said that Sir Henry Halford's Wistow Hall "possesses nothing in its exterior form of the grandeur of ancient architecture nor of the modern disciplines of art."⁵¹ He did however concede that Gopsall Hall was "a magnificent seat, and that the Dixies' Bosworth Hall was "a pretty embellishment to Market Bosworth" and had in places, "the air of grandeur."⁵²

A similar lack of enthusiasm exists in contemporary descriptions of some features of the interiors of houses, such as those relating to paintings and books. Collections of art were firmly based on family portraits and, for the wealthy, works of Italian, French and Dutch masters (or works attributed to them or their schools). Paintings, or some of those by continental masters, were valuable possessions, evidence not only of good taste but of material wealth and were displayed to impress the visitor, while portraits of previous family members, were testimony to a family's status over generations. Nichols noted the paintings displayed a number of houses but what is striking is how few he described. The

⁵¹ Throsby, 1, pp. 99, 57, 192, 187. This unflattering view of Leicestershire's houses has lasted into the twentieth century. Pevsner wrote that the layman might think of its countryside and its hunts, but "of buildings he will hardly think at all." (*Leicestershire*, p. 17).

⁵² Throsby, 1, pp. 198-9, 280.

influence of Grand Tours undertaken earlier in the eighteenth century was much in evidence in the more impressive collections, such as those built up by Sir Arthur Hesilrige (1709-63) at Noseley and Sir William Skeffington (1742-1815) at Skeffington Hall.⁵³ Garendon Hall was noted more for its architecture than paintings. Ambrose Phillipps (1707-1737), an amateur architect, brought back from his travels a series of sketches and designs based on classical buildings, which he translated into an archway, a temple, and an 80 foot obelisk in his park.⁵⁴ Of his paintings, Nichols mentions only family portraits but by the second half of the nineteenth century, Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle's collection of 72 paintings included works by Canaletto, Poussin, Titian and Van Eyck.⁵⁵ Other collections mentioned by Nichols, including those at Beaumanor and Lockington Hall, consisted mainly of historic family portraits.⁵⁶ Local artists, such as John Fernley and Ben Marshall, and depictions of hunting scenes, were also encouraged by men such as Charles Loraine Smith MP (1751-1835) of Enderby Hall, himself an amateur painter and deputy master of the Quorn.⁵⁷

⁵³ Nichols, 2, part 2, p. 749-50 for Noseley; 3 part 1, p. 440 for Skeffington.

⁵⁴ Nichols, 3, part 2, p. 802-3. See also Girouard, 'Phillipps of Garendon'.

⁵⁵ See chapter 4.

⁵⁶ Nichols, 3 part 1 p. 146-7 & 3, part 2, p. 876. His survey is perhaps incomplete and depended upon information and access provided by house owners.

⁵⁷ M. A. Wingfield, *A Dictionary of Sporting Artists 1650-1990* (1992), p. 265; *VCH*, 3, p. 221; Raymond Carr, *English Fox Hunting* (1975), p. 76.

The possession of a well-stocked library was however a mark of the cultivated gentleman. When the contents of Nevill Holt were sold after the death of Charles Nevill in 1848, the first two days of the auction were devoted to the sale of a library of 5,000 books which included "many scarce and valuable works" of English and foreign literature, theology and history.⁵⁸ The library of a literary figure such as Joseph Cradock, with its first editions and classical works, was favourably commented on by Throsby.⁵⁹ Later, the Rev George Fenwicke MA (1783-1874), the Rector of Blaston and a noted antiquarian, owned some 10,000 books.⁶⁰ While such volumes were clearly valuable and impressive – and no doubt well-used by men such as Cradock or Fenwicke - they did not always offer any reliable indication of the owner's intellectual prowess. A cautionary observation on the libraries of the gentry came from Albert Pell, MP for South Leicestershire from 1868-85. He wrote that the library at Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire of his former school-fellow, Sir Charles Isham, held "the usual collection of British and other classics in folios and quartos of very respectable dates in handsome bindings. It contained no modern books from Sir Walter Scott downwards, and I never saw a single volume from those

⁵⁸ *LJ*, 18 August 1848. The sale marked the gradual withdrawal of the Nevills from Holt, where they had lived since the fifteenth century. The house was empty from 1861 and sold seven years later.

⁵⁹ Cradock owned the best editions of the classics, including works by Voltaire, Milton and Erasmus. (Throsby, 1, pp. 188-9)

⁶⁰ Rimmington, *Incumbents*, p. 106. Fenwicke's son, the Revd. Gerard Fenwicke, owned 1,239 acres in Leicestershire in 1873 (ROL).

shelves in the hands of any reader.”⁶¹ For the more literary, books could form a focus for the creation of small groups of like-minded gentlemen which formed part of the gentry's local networks. In the 1770s a book club was formed at Market Harborough and Kibworth, which included among its 20 or so members, Sir George Robinson and John Peach Hungerford MP.⁶²

Travel remained one of more formative experiences which could influence the cultural outlook of a younger member of the gentry, and help develop new networks of connections and acquaintances. But its extent, forms and destinations changed over the period. Travel had many purposes, for education, leisure, in government service, or for adventure and escape. In the eighteenth century the Grand Tour, had been, for the wealthiest, an important part of the ‘finishing’ process of education. On the eve of the period, the typical continental tour was undertaken by Sir George Beaumont and his wife, who travelled in 1782-83 to Italy, where he had taken painting lessons and acquired several works by Claude and Poussin.⁶³ Joseph Cradock of Gumley Hall, the writer and London literary figure, progressed in leisurely fashion through France and the Netherlands for two years from October

⁶¹ *The Reminiscences of Albert Pell*, (1908) pp. 276-7.

⁶² Langford, *Propertied Englishman*, p. 125.

⁶³ Owen & Brown, *Genius*, pp. 41-55.

1783 and again in 1786.⁶⁴ It was however far from the only form of foreign travel made by the sons of the gentry at that time. In the 1760s, Andrew Burnaby (1732-1812), Rector of Asfordby and Archdeacon of Leicester, for example, had travelled in north America for two years and for five years was the British chaplain at Leghorn and visited Corsica.⁶⁵ Earlier, Samuel Phillipps, who inherited Garendon from his brother Ambrose in 1737, and another brother, William, had been merchants in Smyrna, while the departures of the disinherited Sir Robert Hesilrige for America in the 1760s, and that of his son, Sir Arthur, to India were noted above.⁶⁶

The Grand Tour, and any continental excursions for leisure or education, became all but impossible during the French Wars.⁶⁷ Travel became largely confined to Britain, building on the fashion for domestic tourism by the better-off which was already developing by the 1780s.⁶⁸ As a young man (when he was still Henry Vaughan), Sir Henry Halford visited Scarborough, which was said to be the "favourite resort of the best

⁶⁴ ODNB 13, pp. 917-8; Cradock, Joseph, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, 4 vols. (1828).

⁶⁵ ODNB, 8, pp. 885-6.

⁶⁶ Chapter 3.

⁶⁷ Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 81. Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad – The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (Stroud, 2003 edition) p. 338.

⁶⁸ Brewer, *Imagination*, pp. 638-41.

families of the midland counties."⁶⁹ Frequent visits were made to Bath or other spa towns and London, at any time of year, as well as to wilder regions such as the Lake District, and, by arrangement, to view great houses.⁷⁰ Excursions to upland regions encouraged the appreciation of natural beauty and fostered the Romantic and neo-gothic imagination at the expense of the classical.⁷¹ In 1790, Thomas Babington accompanied William Wilberforce on a short tour of Wales.⁷² Sir George Beaumont's frequent visits to the Lake District, in the company of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, for example, and their influence on his outlook and the laying out of his new house and grounds at Coleorton, epitomise this frame of mind. Sir George returned to Italy in the 1820s but for a generation, the inability to view the great remains of antiquity or Renaissance architecture in their Italian settings, meant they were less likely to be imitated or be as powerful a source of inspiration for new buildings at home.

The scale of internal travel, and its place in the life of the country gentleman, can be further illustrated by the dairies of John Frewen Turner of Cold Overton. He was altogether a more restless, even

⁶⁹ Munk, p. 22. Joseph Cradock also visited frequently Scarborough in his youth (*Memoirs*, 1, p. 4).

⁷⁰ From the evidence of correspondence with Nichols about visits to Bath, Joseph Cradock and his wife were regular visitors and stayed there in 1806, 1809, 1811, 1812, 1815 and 1816 (NAD).

⁷¹ Brewer, *Imagination*, p. 620.

⁷² Robert & Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (1838), vol. 1, p. 277.

compulsive, traveller. His daily jottings described a hectic progression from town to town: in 1790 he visited London, Birmingham, Gloucester, Worcester, Stonehenge, Winchester, Portsmouth, Arundel, Brighton, Eastbourne before going to his estates in Sussex, and then journeyed along the south coast turning inward to Bath before returning to Leicestershire after an absence of six months.⁷³ It was not an untypical year. In 1793, Frewen Turner was in London (where he saw Mrs Siddons as Lady Macbeth), Bath, Sussex and Kent and was in Leicestershire for just six weeks in the autumn.⁷⁴ His travels combined family business and the inspection of his estates, with sightseeing and mixing with people of all classes. When not travelling, Frewen Turner preferred quieter, even solitary pursuits, such as his habit of commencing a new year in reading scriptural works. In his diary he recorded "cheerful" evenings "over a pipe" with the rector, family dinners and an endless round of social visits with genteel neighbours and meetings with land agents and lawyers, occasional attendance on the magisterial bench, or at meetings to advance canal construction. He embodied the various interlinked strands of the world of the propertied gentleman at the start of the period, with its mixture of mobility and routine, business and pleasure.

⁷³ ESRO, FRE/754, *Pocket Diary 1790*.

⁷⁴ ESRO, FRE/755, *Pocket Diary 1793*.

Only after 1815 did leisured foreign travel fully resume. But the Grand Tour never quite regained its former importance as a course of immersion in art and culture. The younger members of the Packe family, including two future MPs, revealed a lack of cultural awareness that was perhaps typical of successive generations of young gentlemen, on a continental journey that lasted from October 1819 to April 1820. George Hussey Packe wrote in his travel diary that "Rouen was as dirty as any other foreign town," and found "nothing particularly curious" in the churches of Lyons. He did however express admiration for the Little Trianon at Versailles, the Pantheon in Paris, among other churches and monuments he encountered.⁷⁵ A decade later, his elder brother, Charles, wrote to another brother, Edmund, from Pisa that: "The Campo Santo an antiquarian would admire but I am not worthy of it though I have pleasure in some sort of antiquities; those here are beyond me. I confess to being much disappointed."⁷⁶ The Leaning Tower however he thought "the most wonderful thing I ever saw", and, four months later, he admired the "indescribably beautiful scenery" around Naples.⁷⁷ He also confessed to not knowing much about paintings, and to finding Venice a "curious place." His trip from the autumn of 1828 to the spring of 1829 took in Munich, Dresden Vienna, Warsaw, St Petersburg and

⁷⁵ ROLLR, DE 5047/80.

⁷⁶ ROLLR, DE 5047/100/2, 2 March 1830.

⁷⁷ ROLLR, DE 5047/101, C. W. Packe to Edmund Packe, 19 July 1830.

Moscow as well as Italy and for part of the time he was accompanied by his wife, Kitty, and brother, James.⁷⁸

Novelty in travel was sought after. For the more enterprising and those pursuing a professional career, opportunities arose beyond the confines, geographic or social, of the 'county community'. Such adventures were far removed from the dilettante excursions characteristic of the eighteenth-century aristocrat's 'gap year.' Charles Packe, a barrister who lived at Stretton Hall, pursued mountaineering and wrote a guide to Pyrenees in 1862.⁷⁹ Moreton Frewen (1853-1924), the grandson of Thomas Frewen Turner, became a cattle rancher in the USA between 1878 and 1885,⁸⁰ while John Goodacre, of a middling gentry family, engaged himself in missionary work among seamen in Honolulu and died in San Francisco in 1920.⁸¹ Edward Dicey established his reputation as a journalist writing about the American Civil War and travelled to Egypt before becoming the Editor of *The Observer* newspaper.⁸² There were signs that this later-Victorian generation felt some dissatisfaction with the privileged society into which they were born and they felt was false and under threat. In his memoirs, Moreton

⁷⁸ ROLLR, DE 5047/95/97/98/99, *Letters from Munich, Vienna, Leipzig and Nuremburg*. In Munich, Packe was presented to the King and Queen of Bavaria and German nobility.

⁷⁹ See also chapter 6; a second edition was published in 1867.

⁸⁰ Moreton Frewen, *Melton Mowbray and other memories* (1924) p. 103ff.

⁸¹ Venn, part 2, 2, p. 582.

⁸² *ODNB*, 16, pp. 45-6.

Frewen wrote that after Oxford and the Inner Temple, he found in society "no oligarchy but vast numbers of well-dressed absolutely idle people who constituted the society of the day."⁸³ Before he departed for the United States, Frewen spent November to April at Melton Mowbray, for the hunting season, followed by a month salmon fishing in Ireland, before he transferred to London from May to July, and then to Goodwood and Cowes, northwards for grouse shooting in August and finally to racing at Doncaster and Newmarket.

The Social Rituals of the Gentry

Those members of the gentry who remained in Leicestershire, or could not afford the unbroken round of peripatetic high-living, inhabited a world of comparatively slow-changing social ritual. It was centred on domestic entrainment from dinner parties to theatrical shows, concerts, charity balls and sport, especially hunting but also cricket, shooting and horse racing. Many of these social rituals were typical of the landed classes generally in much of the eighteenth as well as the nineteenth century and (while those surrounding hunting were at their grandest in Leicestershire) were not peculiar to the county.⁸⁴ They might, however,

⁸³ Frewen, pp. 96-7.

⁸⁴ See Gallon, *Hampshire Gentry*, pp. 247-89. He found that the Hampshire gentry passed their time in much the same way as those of other counties: at assemblies, balls, sports, theatres, concerts and in travel.

bring the gentry into contact with members of national and indeed European elites as well as wealthy financiers and businessmen and elements of the professional middle classes. Although, as sources of amusement and entertainment, such diversions represented the 'lower' rather than the 'higher' levels of the gentry's cultural world, they presented numerous opportunities for developing social connections and networks.

Of all these activities, fox hunting above all characterised the identity of Leicestershire's social life. By the opening of the period, it was on its way to establishing itself as one of the premier hunting counties in England. The narrative of its growth as an organised sport from the mid-eighteenth century has been told many times and will not be repeated here.⁸⁵ Its development was encouraged by enclosure and later by the coming of the railways, which made the county more readily accessible by day visitors from London and elsewhere. It made the county, and above all, Melton Mowbray, a centre for fashionable society from the autumn until early spring. As such, it provided the possibility for the Leicestershire gentry to mingle with peers, politicians and statesmen, foreign nobility and royalty and the merely rich and the exotic, who could afford the outlay of several thousand pounds required

⁸⁵ see Thompson, *Landed Society*, p. 144-50; Ellis, *Quorn*; Carr, *Hunting*; Simpson, *Leicestershire Hunts*, and the *VCH*, 3, pp. 270-5.

to finance a stable of horses and pack of hounds for a season. During the entire period, Henry Greene of Rolleston was the only local squire who the Master of the Quorn, from 1841-47.⁸⁶ Charles Lorraine Smith MP was earlier Deputy Master but all other Masters came from the nobility or from outside the county. Some, such as Sir Richard Sutton, Master from 1847-56 and the Liverpool businessman, John Coupland, who headed the Quorn from 1870-1884, acquired land in the county but others, including George Osbaldeston, did not.⁸⁷ It became more usual for visiting huntsmen to rent a house - one of the numerous smaller country properties described as 'hunting lodges' - for the season. They did however enter the social life of the county and were entertained by members of the resident nobility and gentry during their stay or attended balls and other gatherings. While many of the county's gentry families were represented on the hunting field, not all followed the hunt, or supported it in principle: Joseph Cradock did not hunt and C. H. Frewen wanted to abolish it.⁸⁸ Increasingly, women riders joined the hunters. Objections that hunting was unsuitable for women, for reasons of dignity and safety, were gradually overcome and their numbers rose towards the end of the period.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ellis, *Quorn*, p. 72; Carr, *Hunting*, p. 164.

⁸⁷ See chapter 4.

⁸⁸ Ellis, *Quorn*, pp. 104-5.

⁸⁹ Ellis, *Quorn*, pp. 106-8.

The nobility and gentry took leading roles in other sports, each of which had its own rules and hierarchies and its attendant social events and entrainments. Cricket was played by all sections of society, between local teams and with ones from other counties, but it was led by the landed classes.⁹⁰ The Game Laws, a controversial and sometimes harshly enforced regime, limited the right to shoot to landowners, a privilege that was ritualised in to the country house shooting party.⁹¹ Leicester was also renowned for its annual race meeting, which took place in September to coincide with the Yeomanry training week. The event attracted large numbers of visitors from all social classes – rising to 50,00 by the 1850s.⁹² Local nobles and members of the gentry attended the occasion in numbers: race week, noted the Leicester Journal, “tends to congregate all the Consequence, Fashion and Beauty of the County.”⁹³ Peers and country gentlemen were to the fore as horse owners and donors of prize money and until the mid nineteenth century, the Steward was a younger member of the local gentry.⁹⁴ The

⁹⁰ A Leicestershire team which beat Derbyshire by eight wickets in 1850 included members of the Hartopp and Burnaby families (*LJ*, 14 June 1851).

⁹¹ P. B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers – The English Game laws 1671-1831*, (Cambridge, 1981); Thompson, *Landed Society*, pp. 136-43. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the *Leicester Journal* printed annually a list of Game Certificate holders. The lists ran to some 500 names including many major landowners. In 1844, Charles March Phillipps hosted a shooting party at Garendon during which 890 head of game were shot (*LJ*, 22 November 1844).

⁹² J. Crump, “‘The Great Carnival of the Year’: Leicester Races in the nineteenth century’, *TLAHS*, 58, 1982-83, pp. 58-74.

⁹³ *LJ*, 22 September 1826.

⁹⁴ From the early 1850s, following the appointment of a new Clerk of the Course, several additional stewards were appointed, including visiting aristocrats. The position also involved acting as Master of Ceremonies at the Race Ball.

Race Ball was one of the social highlights of the year, and on occasion the wives and daughters of the nobility and gentry joined with those of leading town families to raise money for the poor.⁹⁵ Towards the end of the period, however, the growing gulf between the country and the borough, and the rise in the number of day-trippers from outside Leicester who came by train, contributed to a decline in the social aspects attached to race week frequented by the gentry.⁹⁶

The Ball and other events surrounding race week were a prominent feature of the gentry's annual social routine. The yearly cycle began in January or February with the annual Loughborough Dispensary Ball, which took place initially at the Bull's Head & Anchor Hotel from its foundation in 1819 onwards. In the 1820s, Town and Country Balls were held throughout the winter months in Leicester, at the same time that Lunatic Asylum Ball and the Market Harborough Dispensary Ball were also held. That most archetypical ritual of county society, the Hunt Ball, took place at the end of the season in the spring, and after a summer break the social calendar resumed with the race meeting and the Yeomanry training week in September. The Quarter Sessions, in January, April, July and September, the County Assizes in January and

⁹⁵ £295 was raised at a bazaar in 1826 (LJ *ibid.*).

⁹⁶ Crump, 'Carnival', p. 61.

July, were also occasions for socialising as well as for a collective focusing on the concerns of the county and its community.

A musical tradition had been established in landed Leicestershire society in the eighteenth century and embraced musical performances in country houses, subscription concerts in the borough from 1785, and the formation of a Leicester Music Society centred on the new Assembly Rooms in 1802.⁹⁷ In 1827, a three-day Leicester Music Festival was held in aid of the Leicester Infirmary, a cause which the gentry had supported for fifty years, the Lunatic Asylum and the Fever House.⁹⁸ In later years, musical performances became more public and professional and attracted the support of the rising middle class of bankers, lawyer, doctors and manufacturers, while events such as concerts organised by the Mechanics Institute in 1838, and the opening of the Temperance Hall, whose promoters frowned on the gentry, added to the drifting apart of borough and county in cultural as well as political activities.

⁹⁷ The chronicler of Leicester's music life was William Gardiner, who wrote *Music and Friends*, 3 vols. (1838). The book was sponsored by Beaumont, Cheney, Hartopp, Packe Paget and Winstanley families among others. For a brief modern account, Max Wade-Matthews, *Musical Leicester* (Leicester, 1998).

⁹⁸ Gardiner, *Music*, 2, p. 629; the Duke of Rutland was its Patron, the Earl of Stamford the President and Vice Presidents consisted of 10 peers, six sons of peers, three senior churchmen 14 baronets, three local MPs (including one of the baronets) and the Mayor of Leicester. (*LJ*, 20 July 1827).

Reports of these events, and lists of the leading figures present at them, appeared in the weekly *Leicester Journal* and other local newspapers.⁹⁹ This coverage continued over the period and was indicative of the increasingly important role of local newspapers and of their relationship with the landed and middle classes who were their main readers. These publications carried not only a range of local news, such as the results of court cases, charity events and from the 1830s detailed accounts of discussions on administrative matters at the borough and county Quarter Sessions, but extensive reports of parliamentary business and national and foreign news (including bulletins on military campaigns). They were an important source of information on a number of levels. In relation to the discussion here, their reporting of the public lives of the elite had the ability to influence social trends within the gentry and aristocracy, in, for example, suggesting which individuals or what events might be considered fashionable, as well as to shape a wider, and potentially more critical, view of the conduct of the landed classes. While the extensive reporting of balls and other social gatherings for the landed classes might have been partly intended to flatter, and boost sales among those whose names appeared, the effects might also have

⁹⁹ The weekly *Journal*, founded in 1753, was the main Tory newspaper, and had an average circulation of approximately 1,400 copies in the 1840s. Several other publications were short lived and the leading radical weekly was the *Leicester Chronicle*, established in 1810 and supported by Walter Ruding. It sold under 1,000 copies a week. See D. Fraser, 'The Press in Leicester c 1790-1850', *TLAHS*, 42 (1966-67), pp. 53-75.

had a damaging affect in drawing attention of their radical critics to the frivolity of the rich.

Yet, for the participants, these events continued over the decades because they had a more serious aspect. They were about more than just the gentry at play. The ball was an important element in building the gentry's social networks, at which they could gather in a structured but relatively relaxed context. They were also a less expensive alternative to domestic entertainment on a grand scale. Family guests, visitors and sportsmen and from outside the county made up parties and extended local squires' circles of acquaintances. Although they were run by and for the landed classes, with for example, a peer as Patron and a member of the gentry as steward or master of ceremonies, balls were in theory open to those who could afford the price of entry. To an extent, therefore, they presented some professionals and a few wealthier farmers, to mingle with their social betters (who were in some cases their employers). Conversely, they provided an occasion for the gentry to assess the social acceptability of a new lawyer or banker, and were also a way of introducing daughters, and sons, to others in socially equivalent families in a strictly regulated environment. The numbers who attended offer some idea of the size of the socially active county society: they varied from event to event and fluctuated over time from

just under 100 to nearly 500.¹⁰⁰ Not every family participated. Some, such as Neville, Franks and Turville, rarely appeared at social or public gatherings, others, like Babington and Marriott, were only occasionally present, and, in their tribulations, Dixie and Hazlerigg were absent from the social as well as the political scene for much of the first half of the period. Much depended ultimately on the inclination of individuals. Such events do not appear to have diminished in popularity over the period. Indeed new ones were instituted from the 1850s, reflecting perhaps a more prosperous and stable economic climate and a desire to broaden the scope of events that had previously been linked to bodies related specifically to Leicestershire. A Leicester & Northampton Ball was advertised in the late 1850s, when a United Counties Ball was also launched.¹⁰¹

In addition to the charity balls, which were exceptional in operating on a 'cash-on-the-door' basis, there were numerous other gatherings at which the gentry met, in small or larger numbers.¹⁰² These embraced private dinner parties, musical or theatrical evenings, parties and balls for weddings, birthday celebrations, and events such as the summer

¹⁰⁰ In 1850 there were just 49 gentlemen and 39 ladies at the Yeomanry Ball but three years later it attracted 450 people, among whom were the Earl of Pontefract, Lord Elibanke and the Baron de Langen, as well as local nobility and gentry. (*LJ*, passim.)

¹⁰¹ *LJ*, 18 February 1859, 14 February 1868.

¹⁰² Cash on entry payment rather than subscription was more characteristic of the urban middle classes (Gunn, *Victorian Middle Class*).

Ivanhoe Archery meetings of the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰³ Some occasions such as weddings and in the grander families, the coming-of-age of the older son and heir, were marked by dinners and parties for estate workers and their families, with lavish teas for their children. Such gestures helped reinforce the gentry's desired reputation for paternalistic munificence. Home theatricals were also sometimes extended to allow admission to non-gentry audiences: the Hartopp family were especially well-known for their regular performances at Dalby Hall, with themselves and their guests taking the leading roles, which were opened on selected evenings to local people.¹⁰⁴

Women played a prominent and sometimes leading part in many of these events and in the wider public life of landed society. While males had the advantage of their own clubs, dining societies, academic or antiquarian pursuits, or as active sportsmen, the role of women was extensive and growing. As organisers and hostesses with a powerful influence over guest lists, they set the style and tone of a social event. But their role was not confined to mere entertainment; they were directly involved in the management of the household and sometimes, like Mrs Anne Pochin, the saviour of the Dixie fortunes, in estate

¹⁰³ Meetings were held monthly in summer during the 1850s (*LJ*, 6 August 1852). For the vogue for medievalism, see Girouard, *Camelot*.

¹⁰⁴ A performance in 1833 of *She Stoops to Conquer* was attended by 25 guests, including the Earls of Wilton and Chesterfield and the Hungarian Count Bathiany, who also followed the Quorn Hunt (*LJ*, 26 January 1833).

matters. Their influence was felt too in political matters; they attended meetings and blended through carefully engineered dinner parties and private functions, the social and political.¹⁰⁵ Their public role was more evident however in philanthropic activity, ranging from the relief of the poor, to promoting education and in many charitable efforts conducted through and with the church¹⁰⁶. One leading example from later in the period was Mary Ann Herrick, the sister of William Perry Herrick of Beaumanor. In 1865, set up the Herrick Fund “for granting annuities to widows and single women afflicted with incurable diseases”.¹⁰⁷ On her death in 1872, she left £1,000 to Wolverhampton Orphans’ Asylum, £800 to Loughborough Dispensary and sums of £100 and £50 to several other charities.¹⁰⁸

Thus, within the ‘county community’ lay many overlapping circles, of individuals, families and groups of families, which extended to a nationwide network of the landed, wealthy and influential. Its participants were joined by shared interests in preserving their status and drew on each other’s experiences, interests and connections to

¹⁰⁵ See Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754-1790* (Oxford, 2005) and K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ See chapter 8.

¹⁰⁷ ROLLR, DE 2815/2, *Foundation Deed for the Herrick Fund*, 24 March 1865; The Fund purchased £2,600 worth of stock in Midland Railway in names of Sir F. W. Heygate of Roecliffe, William Perry Herrick and E. C. Middleton of Loughborough; Trustees included Sir G J Palmer. Six annuities of £20 each a year were paid initially, later increased to ten.

¹⁰⁸ *LJ*, 23 February 1872.

complement their own and so help reinforce their standing. It was through such networks that the gentry was able to sustain its influence. The arena for building them was often the ballroom or the shooting party. Such entertainments served for them a serious purpose in constructing a sense of community and were an integral part of the totality of the culture of the gentry, not an inconsequential appendage. It was perhaps one of the secrets of the survival of the landed classes that apparent idleness masked earnest intent.

6. The Making of the Country Gentleman: Education and Marriage

On 26 December 1838, Edmund Packe, an officer in the Horse Guards, and the younger brother of C. W. Packe MP, offered some fatherly advice to his twelve-year-old son, Charles, who was about to go to Eton. In a short letter, Packe senior wrote that "... Going to a public school is a great advance towards manhood and you will now be obliged to act for yourself a great deal more than you have hitherto done."¹⁰⁹ He appended to the note a list of principles that he believed should govern the behaviour of a young gentleman: Edmund warned his son against falling into debt, bullying or being bullied, encouraged him in the "habit of being clean and tidy in your person," emphasised the importance of friendship and the virtues of industry and perseverance, and "always bearing in mind your Duty towards God."

The content of this early-Victorian lesson in good conduct was, in its individual aspects, unremarkable. It illustrated however the importance that the gentry attached at that time to the education of a son and revealed something of their view of its purpose. Education for a son of

¹⁰⁹ ESRO FRE5047/116/1-3, *Letter*, 26 December 1838. Edmund Packe (1799-1874) was the third of five sons of Charles James Packe of Prestwold Hall. He married Sarah Mansfield, the daughter of a Leicester banker and MP, John Mansfield (1778-1838). Mansfield and C. J. Packe served together as justices at the County Quarter Sessions and at the Assizes in the 1820s. Charles (1826-96), Edmund's eldest son attended the Inner Temple and became a magistrate, a landowner with 1,000 acres that brought in £2,000 a year and a renowned mountaineer, whose guide to the Pyrenees was published in two editions the 1860s.

the landed classes was at this time as much about the building of character according to clear principles of Christian morality in preparation for a future role as a member of a ruling elite as it was about personal academic attainment. Learning and scholarly endeavour were nowhere mentioned by Edmund, except by implication in a cautionary comment that Genius was of no avail without hard work and that "Mankind are much more equal in talent than is supposed."

If education, from school to university, represented a formative stage in the development of the country gentleman, marriage marked an even more decisive step towards his maturity and the assumption of his full responsibilities. For many, it came within a few years of leaving university: of the 19 out of 24 members of the greater and middling gentry in Leicestershire at the end of the period who are known to have married, 15 did so before the age of 27. The marriage of an elder son and heir was a matter of supreme importance to the immediate and the wider family. It sought to ensure the continuation of the dynastic line, the preservation of its property and the forging of alliances with other wealthy or landed families, above considerations of romantic attachment and personal preference.¹¹⁰ For both parties to the match, it was in the words of a Yorkshire gentlewoman in 1766, a "thing of the utmost

¹¹⁰ See Habakkuk, *Estates System*, p. 146.

consequence."¹¹¹ For younger sons and daughters, marriage could make the difference between maintaining a place in landed society and entry into the professional world of the church or army. This chapter considers these two areas in the context of the evolution of the culture of the gentry over the period and the development of the Leicestershire gentry's social networks.

The Pattern of Education

Education helped define the gentry's sense of identity and purpose. The public schools and the ancient universities offered a means through which the gentry could prepare its sons to enable them to manage their affairs more efficiently and play a continued part in public life. In the nineteenth century, public school education, with its emphasis on discipline and on classical studies and religion rather than science, appealed to the innate conservatism of the gentry: it encouraged conformity and helped reinforce the values and assumed superiority of the old elite.¹¹² Attendance at one of the major schools, most of which were in the south of England, also brought them into contact with the sons of other wealthy landowners, of London-based merchants and

¹¹¹ Quoted in Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 39.

¹¹² See, W. D. Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain 1750-1990* (1993) and Martin Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1950* (Cambridge, 1985) for discussion of the effect of public school education on the business acumen of later generations of Britain's leaders.

ambitious professionals and businessmen. Followed by a sustained period at Oxford or Cambridge universities or at one of the Inns of Court, the educational process incorporated sections of the gentry into a national framework which moulded the culture, ethics and outlook of not just a local but a national and imperial elite. Educated members of the gentry were to be found in the clergy, the higher ranks of the army and navy, in the law and government service. Through those avenues, often physically removed from the home manor, the landed estate and the 'county community', the gentry secured for itself a role which drew on the virtues of application and public service which had been instilled into them from an early age. The principles which Edmund Packe set out for his son, based on a sense of Christian duty in both private and public spheres, reflected however not just the values of the gentry but of the wider ruling elite. This correspondence of values, nurtured and transmitted through the institutionalised educational system, helped sustain the gentry's influence and its social role when its formal political power was beginning to decline. If the gentry lacked a truly distinctive, innovative culture of its own, in any creative or intellectual sense, it learned how to exploit the opportunities presented by the broader culture of the period, in which education, leadership and expertise, as well as social position and wealth, were widely esteemed, and in which

the possibilities of greater travel, contacts and communication were increasing.

This reawakened interest built on some earlier attitudes among the landed classes to education. Both the gentry and the nobility had from the early modern period embraced the educational facilities available to them.¹¹³ Initially, this involved the use of a private tutor or attendance at a grammar school, followed by a spell at Oxford or Cambridge without taking a degree, a period at one of the Inns of Court, and for the sons of the wealthiest landowners, time – from several months to a year or more - spent on the continent on what became established as the Grand Tour. Even in the eighteenth century, only a minority went to a public school: in Hampshire, only 31% of a sample of 100 gentry did so.¹¹⁴ And only one in ten of the Glamorgan gentry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made the journey to an English public school.¹¹⁵ From the restoration until the mid-eighteenth century university attendance declined, partly as a result of demographic crisis, and partly as the universities became perceived “finishing schools” for

¹¹³ For education in the early modern era, see, Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp. 243-75; Mingay, *Gentry*, pp. 153-63, Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?*, Beckett, *Aristocracy*, Langford, *England 1722-1783*, Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1967 revised edition), pp. 303-318 and his article, ‘The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640’, *Past & Present*, 28, (1964), pp. 41-70.

¹¹⁴ Gallon, *Hampshire Gentry*, p. 219.

¹¹⁵ Jenkins, *Glamorgan Gentry*, p. 217.

the sons of the elite, with a reputation for wanton conduct among their undergraduates.¹¹⁶

The start of the period under study coincided, however, with a renewed demand from upper and middle classes for education in a changing social and political climate. The gentry's use of the educational system, and the manner in which it used it for its own social and cultural purposes, was part of its reaction to these evolving circumstances. These conditions required of the landed classes practical and intellectual responses: increased efficiency in the oversight of their estates at a time when enclosure and improved communication were altering the very landscape, and the justification of their status in a climate strained by the pressures of war and demands for political reform. These matters crowded in on the landed classes and demanded a more thorough approach in preparing its members to assume, and retain, their customary reins of power. In the process, the burgeoning public schools supplanted the grammar schools as the first choice of the richer or more ambitious sections of the landed classes and they returned to the universities, which themselves began a long slow process of reform that continued in bursts throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Hoppit, *Land of Liberty?*, pp. 168-72; Stone, *Open Elite?*, p. 169..

¹¹⁷ See Hilton, *England 1783-1846*, pp. 532-8; Perkin, *English Society*, pp. 292-302; T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools* (1957); M. G. Brock & M. S. Curthoys, *The*

Yet, even then, as Thompson said, it was “very likely but by no means certain that he [an aristocrat] would have been at one of the great public schools.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, after 1800, the evidence set out below suggests that while it remained only a minority of members of the Leicestershire gentry who attended public schools (rather than local or grammar schools) and went to university, the numbers showed a marked increase from the previous century. The pattern of public school and university education for the gentry was influenced by a variety of factors, including family tradition, its wealth and the direction of a family’s ambition as well as the aptitude and ability of the boy in question. After several years of the rigours of a boarding school, those who went onto university were more likely than some previous generations to stay to take a degree.

To examine more closely the pattern of education among the Leicestershire gentry, information has been assembled from a representative sample of 28 Leicestershire gentry families, using the registers of eleven leading public schools, and the university lists for Oxbridge and Cambridge compiled by Foster and Venn, which

History of the University of Oxford, The Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1997) and Peter Searby, *A History of the University of Cambridge 1750-1870* (Cambridge, 1977).

¹¹⁸ Thompson, *Landed Society*, pp. 83-84.

sometimes also give information on schooling.¹¹⁹ An examination of the records of the leading public schools shows that 85 out of 221 sons from the selected families were educated at one of the selected schools between 1800 and 1875 (38.5%).¹²⁰ Some 37 went to Eton, 12 to Rugby, nine to Harrow, three to Winchester and two each to Westminster and Uppingham. There were some clear family patterns: all ten Packe boys who received a public school education went to Eton. The Fosbrookes, a lesser gentry family, favoured Rugby for the four of its sons for whom there is a record. Other families were more varied in their choices: three sons of the Cradock Hartopps went to Rugby, and one each to Eton, Shrewsbury and Radley. Three sons of the Hazlerigg family were pupils at Harrow and two at Eton. Of eight public school-educated Burnaby sons, three went to Eton, two to Uppingham and one each to Harrow, Haileybury and Oakham. The 11 leading gentry families in 1873 used seven schools for the education of 36 sons throughout the

¹¹⁹ The school register consulted were: Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Charterhouse, Winchester, Uppingham, Westminster, Oakham, Radley, Shrewsbury and Haileybury. The 28 families, which have been used here and in subsequent sections, were: Ashby, Babington, Beaumont, Bewicke, Burnaby, Curzon of Breedon, Dixie, Cradock Hartopp, Dawson, Farnham, Fosbrooke, Fowke, Frewen, Halford, Hartopp, Hazlerigg, Herrick, March Phillipps (de Lisle), Marriott, Moore, Packe, Paget, Palmer of Wanlip, Palmer of Carlton, Pares, Pochin, Winstanley and Wollaston.

¹²⁰ The total size of the sample is subject to some slight variation in each of the three categories in this chapter (school, university, marriage) to allow for individuals who attended school in the 1790s but were at university after 1800, or who completed their education before the latter date and married after it, or who died while at school or university. Those who attended school or university before 1875 but married after that date have been excluded from the section on marriages. For comparisons with the eighteenth century, four gentry families of that time (Boothby, Cave, Ruding and Wigley) were substituted for four who had not then acquired full gentry status (Curzon, Fowke, Paget and Pares).

period: 22 went to Eton (61%), five to Rugby, two each to Harrow and Westminster and one to each of Uppingham, Charterhouse and Winchester. Eton was clearly the principal choice for the wealthier gentry families, as it was for the aristocracy generally. Across the Leicestershire gentry as a whole, the popularity of Rugby suggests that geographical proximity may have been a deciding factor for many families. Distance may also account for the relatively low levels of attendance at Charterhouse and Winchester.

Although it is difficult to make exact comparison with the eighteenth century there appears to have a marked increase in the use of public schools by the Leicestershire gentry.¹²¹ From information relating to 177 sons of 28 Leicestershire gentry families, between 1700 and 1800, the available records indicate that a total of 37 (20.9%) went to a public school. Of these 37, 19 went to Rugby, including three future baronets of the Cave family, and two Wigley brothers – James (1700-65) who was MP for Leicester from 1737 until his death (when his estates passed to his nephew, Edward Hartopp) and his older brother, Edward (1697-1716).¹²² Only seven attended Eton, which did not become the leading school for major gentry families until the nineteenth century. Six others

¹²¹ There were fewer public schools in existence and records were not as complete: Charterhouse for example has records from 1769 and Harrow from 1770.

¹²² G. R. Coley, *Rugby School Registers 1675-1857* (1933) and A. T. Mitchell, *Rugby School Register, 1675-1842* (1901).

are known to have attended Leicester Grammar or other local schools, including Joseph Cradock of Gumley Hall (1743-1826), whose family were rising from a non-landed background in mid-century. He attended the school from the age of nine until he went to Cambridge University when he was 17.¹²³ Use of non-public schools continued into the nineteenth century. Ambrose March Phillipps de Lisle, the son of Charles March Phillipps MP, himself an old Etonian, was sent at the age of eleven to Maisemore Court school near Gloucester, where he spent six not altogether happy years before going to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he did not stay to take a degree.¹²⁴

The popularity of a school could rise and fall, reflecting changes in the gentry's perception of the quality of education or of its usefulness in advancing its social connections. Rugby, for example, fell out of favour with the leading gentry families during Thomas Arnold's headmastership from 1828-42: only two (from the March Phillipps family) attended during this time, despite (or perhaps because of) the radical changes that he introduced in the school. A late Victorian admirer of Arnold's achievements at Rugby considered that, like other public schools, it had been a hotbed of vice and cruelty before his arrival. Arnold thoroughly reformed it, academically as well as in matters of discipline, introduced

¹²³ Cradock, 1, p. 3. Attendance was not however limited to townspeople. Three sons of the Earl of Stamford were also pupils at the school.

¹²⁴ Pawley, pp. 10-11; Purcell, p. 4

mathematics and modern languages onto the curriculum and gave greater importance to English, history and geography.¹²⁵ Arnold appealed to more liberal Anglican parents and aimed to instil into his pupils clear religious and moral principles, gentlemanly conduct and intellectual ability.¹²⁶ By comparison, overall numbers were falling at Eton in the 1830s, even when it was becoming the preferred school of greater gentry families.¹²⁷ In the 1850s, numbers began to rise again but science was introduced into the 5th Form only in 1869, when greater emphasis was also given to mathematics and geography.¹²⁸

School education of this nature was available only to sons - and there appears to be little distinction in the level of education given to eldest and younger boys.¹²⁹ For daughters it was a different story. Formal schooling for girls had been growing since the early seventeenth century and the number of schools available for them increased further at the end of the eighteenth century.¹³⁰ An illustration of the range of subjects taught to girls from the upper levels of society at this time is provided by a school for the "Education of Young Ladies" run by the Rev. Jenks

¹²⁵ W. H. D. Rouse, *A History of Rugby School* (1898), p. 223

¹²⁶ J. B. Hope Simpson, *Rugby Since Arnold* (1967), pp. 5-6; Hilton, pp. 465-467

¹²⁷ A. Clutton-Brock, *Eton* (1900), p. 243.

¹²⁸ H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *A History of Eton College 1440-1875* (1875), p. 481

¹²⁹ Education was important for younger sons as a route into a profession (Mingay, *Gentry*, p. 155).

¹³⁰ Jacqueline Eales, *Women in early modern England 1500-1700* (1998), pp. 35-40, and R. B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850* (1998), p. 137.

and his wife in Leicester in 1814.¹³¹ It offered a mixture of domestic topics and feminine 'accomplishments' with a core of academic study, embracing lessons in needlework, reading and English grammar, geography, history, rhetoric and composition and lectures on natural philosophy, with French, music, drawing and dancing. Board and education were priced at 30 guineas a year, with washing at five guineas, and dancing two guineas a quarter extra. Such fees could only appeal to the wealthiest classes in town or country but it cannot be said to what extent the gentry or nobility patronised such a school. For the richest of the landed classes, the private tutor might still be preferred for the education of daughters.

Increased numbers of gentry sons went on to university, contributing to the rise in attendance levels in the nineteenth century at both Oxford and Cambridge, during a long process of academic and institutional reform.¹³² A total of 28 out of the 37 who attended Eton after 1800 progressed to university, and 10 of the 12 boys from Rugby. Just over than half of the sample of 28 families were at a university between 1800 and 1875: 116 out of 227 (51.1%), including one who was at London. In the eighteenth century 67 out of 171 members of these same families attended university (39.2%). If those who had yet to reach gentry

¹³¹ Advertised in the *Leicester Journal*, 14 Jan 1814.

¹³² In 1795 Cambridge University had 736 undergraduates and by 1850 there were 1,753; Searby, *Cambridge*, appendix I, pp. 727-8.

status are replaced by leading gentry families of the time, the numbers at university in the eighteenth century rise to 81 out of 190 (42.6%).¹³³

Family tradition, and geographical proximity and ease of communication, even in the age of railways, helped decide the choice of university as much as any academic considerations. A majority of nineteenth century undergraduates from the Leicestershire gentry favoured Cambridge University over Oxford: 63 (54.3%) of the wider sample attended the former, with 52 (44.8%) at the latter. Among the selected families, ten members of the Babingtons of Rothley found themselves at Cambridge after 1800, while only one went to Oxford, and 13 of the Burnaby family were at Cambridge and three at Oxford. The preference could be equally as pronounced among relatively new gentry families who were keen to emulate more established ones: six Pares' sons went to Cambridge after 1800 and only one to Oxford. The extended Babington and Burnaby families accounted for 21% of the total from 1800-75. Their use of the universities had less to do with improving their status – both declined as landowners during the period – but represented a continuation of the more traditional link between landowning families and the church. Nine of the 16 Burnabys and three from the Babington family were destined for the clergy, a profession for

¹³³ The same substitutions of families have been made here as in the schools sample (see footnote 8 above).

which a degree was a necessity. Indeed, those who went on to enter the clergy formed the largest single social or occupational group for university matriculants in the first half of the century, followed by a much smaller number who in later life were purely landowners or otherwise had no profession.¹³⁴

The choice of college at university and the duration of stay also gave some indication of the purpose in going to university and what was expected from the experience. Leicestershire gentry favoured the fashionable colleges frequented by the nobility: Trinity and St John's at Cambridge and Christ Church at Oxford.¹³⁵ Some 27 of the 70 Cambridge students were at Trinity, 13 at St John's and 20 (out of 53 at Oxford) at Christ Church.¹³⁶ Two-thirds of the Etonians who went on to university attended one of those three leading colleges. Some of the undergraduates from wealthier families in particular continued the practice of staying for a few terms but did not take a degree. Before 1800, 17 out of 77 of those from Leicestershire gentry families did not

¹³⁴ At Oxford in 1818-19, 49.7% of those matriculating became clergymen, and 18.8% of formed part of the landed classes or followed no profession. By 1848-49 the figures had dropped to 49.3% and 11.7% respectively. At Cambridge the figures for the same year were 53.5% and 48.4% for clergy and 12.5% and 11.7% for landed/no profession. (Brock & Curthoys, *Oxford*, pp. 503-504).

¹³⁵ Beckett, *Aristocracy*, p. 101, suggested they were most the popular colleges for peers; Stone, *Open Elite?*, p. 171, identified Christ Church and Trinity as colleges attended by sons of the elite in the early modern period and Westminster and Eton as their chosen schools

¹³⁶ Other colleges favoured by the Leicestershire gentry were, at Cambridge, Emmanuel (7) and Trinity Hall and Pembroke (5 each), and at Oxford the preferred colleges after Christ Church were Brasenose (8), and Balliol (4).

take a degree, compared with 22 out of 124 between 1800 and 1875.¹³⁷ This marks a fall in the 'drop-out' rate from 22% to 17.6%. Among those whom the records after 1800 indicate 'matriculated' but did not take a degree were two Sir George Beaumonts, the eighth and ninth baronets, at Christ Church, Oxford in 1819 and 1846, Edward Hartopp, later a county MP, and Ambrose March Phillipps. With the former it was perhaps the case that they were continuing the characteristic eighteenth century practice of attending a university to savour something of the style and atmosphere of university life and to meet other well-bred young men, without entering into any academic commitment. In Phillipps' case, he was already a convert to the Catholicism that was to dominate his life and left in 1828 when he became seriously ill.¹³⁸ The proportion of those from Leicestershire who did not stay to take a degree was however lower than general figures suggest: 29 out of 142 matriculants in 1771 had not taken a degree by 1881 (20.4%) and of 430 matriculants in 1837, 106 had not gone onto degree level by 1841 (27%), the rise attributed to more difficult exams.¹³⁹

The incidence of public school education followed by university was also a reflection of a family's wealth and status. The richer families were more likely than the less well-off to send their elder son to a major

¹³⁷ Based on Venn and Foster.

¹³⁸ Pawley, p. 31.

¹³⁹ Searby, *Cambridge*, p. 68.

public school and then to university: of the heads of the 11 largest gentry landowners at the end of the period, seven went to public school and eight to university. Those at lower levels made significantly less use of either public schools or universities, although more of the lesser gentry went to university than attended a public school: out of 33 heads of lesser gentry families in 1874, some 13 attended public school, while 16 went to university. First-generation landowners with a business or industrial background attended neither.

For all the sons of the gentry who attended either a public school or a university, the opportunity existed to meet others of comparable social standing and strike up relationships which might prove of value in adult life. This was as attractive to established families as to newcomers trying to enter landed society or seek influential allies. They could all at the least expect to meet other sons of the Leicestershire gentry. Numerous examples from the registers of Rugby and Eton could be quoted: C. W. Packe, Conservative MP for Leicestershire South from 1835-67 was at Eton with the future Liberal member for the borough, Thomas Pares; Packe's brother, George Hussey, MP, was a pupil at Eton in 1808 with Robert Otway-Cave (1796-1844), MP for Leicester from 1826-30 and later for Tipperary. Edgell Wyatt-Edgell, who married Henrietta Otway-Cave, Baroness Brayne and sister of Robert, was a

contemporary at Eton with Sir George Beaumont, the 8th baronet; Thomas Pares, who inherited the family's main seat at Hopewell Hall in Derbyshire, was in the 4th form at Eton in 1841 with Edwyn Sherrard Burnaby, the son of Edwin Burnaby DL JP, a captain in the 3rd Dragoon Guards and Gentleman of the Kings' Privy Chamber.

There was also the prospect of extending the circle of acquaintances more widely. In the same form at Eton as C. W. Packe and Thomas Pares was the Marquis of Bute. The poet Shelley was a contemporary. Among the fellow pupils of Edward Hartopp MP at Eton in 1826 was W. E. Gladstone. At Rugby, the sons of the Leicestershire gentry could expect to rub shoulders with those from neighbouring counties, some of whom also owned property in Leicestershire, such as Isham from Northamptonshire, Harpur-Crewe of Derbyshire and Skipwith of Warwickshire. At Eton, school fellows were likely to come from the aristocracy: Sir Arthur Hazlerigg was in the Remove in 1826 with two earls and a marquis and in 1835, Sir Myles Browne-Cave, a minor gentry figure from a branch of the Caves of Stanford, was in the Lower Fifth with the future Earl of Harewood, Earl Howe, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Hastings and a member of the immensely wealthy Arkwright family. During his somewhat truncated time at Cambridge, Ambrose March Phillipps formed a long-term friendship with the Irish

born writer, Catholic and medievalist, Kenelm Digby (c 1795-1880).¹⁴⁰ This was the first of many and varied relationships which March Phillipps formed, with churchmen, political figures and academics, on the continent as well as at home, outside the ranks of the county gentry as he began his life-long campaign to restore Catholicism in England. In somewhat less earnest vein, Moreton Frewen recalled in his memoirs that he spent so much of his time at Cambridge in the early 1870s hunting in the company of the likes of Lord Crewe and the 4th Earl Grey that he was lucky to get even a modest degree.¹⁴¹

Edmund Cradock Hartopp, the former Edmund Bunny, developed a long lasting and influential circle of acquaintances. In 1791, he had been invited by Jacob Pleydell Bouverie, the 2nd Earl of Radnor, to join a group of friends who had been contemporaries at the same Oxford college more than a quarter of a century before, with the proposal that they should meet from time in London, where many of them had residences or were pursuing careers. The following year they held the first of their gatherings, in what became known as the University College Club. Hartopp and up to 33 others continued to meet until at least 1805, on the first Saturday of each February, March, April and May, at half past five in the afternoon for dinner at the Crown and Anchor

¹⁴⁰ *ODNB*, 33, pp. 961-3; Pawley, *Faith and Family*, pp. 23-6; Purcell, *Ambrose Phillipps*, pp. 33-4.

¹⁴¹ Frewen, *Melton Mowbray*, pp. 38-39.

Tavern on the Strand in London. In March of that year, the membership commissioned an engraved list of their names, dates of their admission to the College, their London and country residences and their public positions.¹⁴² They formed a distinguished group. Among its 28 surviving members were Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, General the 2nd Earl Moira of Donington in Leicestershire, the army's Commander-in-Chief in Scotland and later Governor General in India, and William Windham, Secretary at War from 1794-1801. Eleven of them had been MPs at some time, seven of them had held government office, five were lawyers and three were clergymen. Politically, the group was essentially Pittite but with a distinct Whig element;¹⁴³ most appeared to have been landed, with property in at least 16 counties and in 21 cases, a London address.¹⁴⁴ Its continued existence over a decade and a half illustrates how a shared educational experience, in this case attendance at an Oxford college, could be used as the foundation for a lasting social and political network of landed and professional men in an organised grouping. Not everyone who attended university could aspire to move

¹⁴² ROLLR, 10D72/541, An engraved list of members produced "as a memorial of their friendship", March 1805. They were not all at the college at the same time as their dates of admission range from June 1761 to May 1772. Club meetings were avoided during the summer and autumn months when parliamentarians and the social elite had escaped London.

¹⁴³ Windham was a Portland Whig, a group who moved to support Pitt in 1794, Moira was a Whig, close to the Prince of Wales, and Hartopp was under the patronage of the hitherto strongly Whig Rutland interest (see chapter 7). The rest were Pittites, with varying degrees of commitment, or supporters of Addington or Grenville. (see Thorne for summaries of their political allegiances).

¹⁴⁴ Most lived in Mayfair. Sir William Skeffington MP, the Constable of Dublin Castle, had a house in Clarges Street, a neighbour of Thomas Boothby and Sir Henry Halford.

in such circles: Hartopp enjoyed good fortune in the extensive property he inherited from distant relatives and enjoyed the patronage of the Isabella, the widow of the 4th Duke of Rutland, who promoted his election as an MP for Leicestershire in 1798, two years after he was created a baronet.¹⁴⁵

Although he mixed with eminent lawyers and was made an Honorary Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford, Cradock Hartopp did not attend an Inn of Court. Indeed, the appeal of the Inns as part of the gentry's educational process became more limited over the period. In the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries a young man might have passed a year or so at an Inn after a similar spell at a university. By the nineteenth, a full three years at university, culminating in the possession of a degree, made the added time and expense at an Inn less attractive, unless a career in the law was intended.¹⁴⁶ From the available registers and other sources, 30 members of the selected families appear to have attended the Inns of Court during the period.¹⁴⁷ They came however from all sections of the gentry, and included heads of established families, as well as younger sons and those from the

¹⁴⁵ See chapter 7.

¹⁴⁶ Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 170; Beckett, *Aristocracy*, p. 100; Langford, *Propertied Englishman*, pp. 88-89 noted that the appeal of the Inns in rounding off a gentleman's education decreased as they focused more on training for the legal profession.

¹⁴⁷ *Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, I Admissions 1520-1799, II, Admissions 1800-1893* (1896); *Gray's Inn Admission Register, 1521-1889*, (1889); *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, 2, 1782-1909* (1949). Registers for the Inner Temple have not been published

newer arrivals and the lesser, fringe gentry, for whom the law continued to be a vehicle of upward social movement. Thirteen went to Lincoln's Inn, six the Middle Temple and two studied at Gray's Inn. Nine are known from other sources (such as Venn or Foster's *Men at the Bar*) to have attended the Inner Temple. Among those to have attended Lincoln's Inns were four members of the Packe family, including C. W. Packe MP, and two each from the Burnaby, Fosbrooke and Dawson families, and three from the Fowke, Frewen and Marriott families at the Middle Temple. Those who are known to studied at the Inner Temple included Samuel March Phillipps, younger brother of Charles March Phillipps MP, who became the Permanent Under Secretary for home affairs, Moreton Frewen the rancher, Charles Packe the mountaineer, and Nathaniel Curzon of Breedon and Lockington. The names of very many of long-established gentry families, such as Beaumont, Dixie, Hazlerigg, Ashby and Pochin, are however absent from the records, but there were several from those on the fringe of the gentry, confirming the role of the law as a vehicle of upward mobility.¹⁴⁸

The evidence indicates increased use by the Leicestershire gentry of public schools and universities in the nineteenth century as part of the

¹⁴⁸ These included William Tailby (1825-1914), the hunt master who bought Skeffington Hall in 1855; J. W. Morrice (b 1821), an Oxford graduate who purchased Carthorse Towers in 1853 and owned 525 acres in Leicestershire in 1873, worth £1,253 annual rental, and Sir John Mellor (see chapter 8, when the role of the gentry in the legal profession will be discussed).

growth of educational institutions over the period. In this wider picture, their educational experience was unexceptional for the landed classes. At the end of the process, a young gentleman would, ideally, have acquired the basics of a classical education, together with some of the personal qualities that defined the 'gentleman'. These might also include garnering the rudimentary principles of law, which would help in the management of his property and equip him better to play his part in public affairs, as a justice or parliamentarian, mixing with his equals (and betters), developing at a formative age useful contacts and connections beyond the county and its immediate community, and widening his experience of life in those ways that all young men wish to widen their experience.

The Pattern of Marriage

The decision to enter a marriage was not a personal one confined to the two people most directly concerned. It had throughout the entire evolution of the aristocracy and the gentry involved fundamental dynastic and financial questions which engaged parents and the wider family; marriage was the means to secure the family's wealth and status, perpetuate its name and property and forge alliances with other rich and influential families. There is a broad measure of agreement

among historians on the importance of these questions, from the early modern period into the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁹ This section is concerned primarily with the social dimensions of marriage, and how the gentry used it to advance or protect its position in society through the creation of new networks of connection and influence; it is less concerned with the internal questions of married and family relationships.

In the nineteenth century, the wider casting of the marriage net – geographically if not socially - enabled landed families to forge a nationwide circle of relationships which helped them sustain their influence and status. Changes in the pattern of marriage contributed to a further weakening of the traditional county community, in which, it has been argued, one of its sustaining characteristics was marriage between local gentry families.¹⁵⁰ Information has been gathered on marriages among 351 members of 28 Leicestershire gentry families between 1800 and 1875, of whom 206 were male and 145 female. Four males who were included in the previous section died before reaching marriageable age, 23 are known to have remained unmarried and the status of 58 is unknown. Of the females 23 were unmarred and 39 were of unknown status. This left a total of 204 people, whose first marriages have been

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp. 60-77; Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, pp. 269-97 and *The Family, Sex & Marriage* (1979 edition); Habakkuk, *Estates System*, pp. 145-243; Thompson, *Landed Society*, pp. 19-21 & Mingay, *Gentry*, p. 110-14.

¹⁵⁰ Everitt, *Change in the Provinces*.

analysed to assess the extent to which marriage remained a means of forming alliances and connections with other landed or influential families and to assess changes in the pattern of marriage among the Leicestershire gentry. Data was compiled from Burk's *Peerage* and *Landed Gentry*, Walford, Fletcher, Cokayne for peer and baronets, Throsby and Nichols, the *History of Parliament* for MPs before 1820, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published biographical material and information contained in the correspondence and papers of a number of families, notably those of Packe, Frewen and Cradock Hartopp. The findings for those who married are set out as follows:

**Table IV: The Pattern of Marriage in the Leicestershire Gentry
1800-1875**

Origins of Spouse	Male	Female	Total	% Total
Leicestershire Gentry in sample of 28 families (1,000 acres or more owned)	13	13	26	12.7
Other & Fringe Leics. Gentry	7	3	10	4.9
Gentry – Other Counties	24	20	44	21.6
Peerage Families	10	13	23	11.3
Clergy Families (if not included in above categories)	10	17 (not including 5 clergymen who were sons of peers)	27	13.1
Professionals – Military, Law, Medicine	6	4	10	4.9
Business, Merchants	1	3	4	2.0
Not Known	50	10	60	29.4
TOTAL	121	83	204	100.00

The social backgrounds of 144 out of the 204 were identified (70.6%). It has not been possible to identify a husband in only 10 cases (12% of the spouses of the total number of females), compared with 50 of the

120 wives (41.3%). This imbalance could denote that men were less likely to marry someone from a landed or professional background, whose names would probably have been recorded in one or other of the contemporary reference works. A more likely explanation is the inherent bias of those directories and dictionaries, which gave less full information for women. The great majority of members of the Leicestershire gentry continued to marry into landed families or, for daughters, into traditional groups such as the clergy. Just over a half married someone from a landowning family, which represents 64.6% of those for whom the spouse's background has been identified. Only a minority of these however were made up of marriages between members of Leicestershire gentry families: just 17.5%, if families outside the sample and those on the fringe are taken into account. A significantly larger number married someone from a gentry family from outside the county. To these can be added the aristocracy, including the sons and daughters of peers, the clergy or other professional families from elsewhere. Members of the Leicestershire gentry were therefore more likely to marry into a similar family from another county than into a local one. Just under a third of the females, for whom the origins or profession of their husband is known, married a clergyman or the son of one, most of whom did not serve in a Leicestershire parish, compared with only 14% of the males who married the daughter of a

churchman.¹⁵¹ Overall, the proportion of marriages to those with a Leicestershire connection declined from the previous century. Between 1700 and 1800, among a sample of 130 members of Leicestershire gentry families, including some on the fringe, a total of 49 (37.7%) married someone from within the county.

Only four marriages after 1800 were recorded with someone who could be described as in business or a merchant. Three of these had West Indian interests and owned estates there. Only one, Robert Brewin (c 1789-1860), who married the daughter of Thomas Paget (1782-1813), was a local businessman. But he had taken the first step into landed society by buying Birstall Hall, and the Paget family was itself newly arrived in the gentry. Paget's elder son, Thomas Paget MP (1778-1862), married Anne, the daughter of his banking partner, Thomas Pares. There were no other marriages between members of the Leicestershire gentry and local businessmen and industrialists.¹⁵² None of the 'unknowns' appears to come from prominent Leicester business circles. The absence of such marriages amply illustrates the social gulf

¹⁵¹ In the case of Sir George Beaumont (1799-1845), the cousin and successor of the art patron, this meant the daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Howley. The grand-daughter of the Rev. Charles Cavendish-Bentinck, of the Duke of Portland's family, and Caroline Burnaby, daughter of Captain Edwyn Burnaby JP, High Sheriff of Leicestershire in 1864 and a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, was Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the consort of King George VI, the late Queen Mother.

¹⁵² D. Freer, 'The dynasty-builders of Victorian Leicester', *TLAHS*, 53 (1977-78), pp. 42-54, traced the marriage connections between many of Leicester's leading industrial families.

which existed throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century between the elites of county and borough, which – as will be shown in the following chapter – were founded on deep differences of religion and politics. For the most part the gentry, and especially older families, had set their sights higher than anything offered by the only modestly well-off hosiery manufacturers on their doorstep. Marriage for the gentry became increasingly about extending their connections to similar families in other counties or where possible into the nobility. For some this appears an assertive strategy of alliance-building. For others, it could be interpreted as more a defensive manoeuvre to seek common cause with those of a similar standing and outlook in a world less sympathetic to landed society.

A number of other patterns are discernable in gentry marriages. First, marriage was embarked upon at an early age, following the pattern among the landed classes of previous centuries.¹⁵³ This was indicative of a desire that a young gentleman, especially the eldest son and heir, should prepare for his future responsibilities soon after reaching maturity. Ambrose March Phillipps was 24 when he married, the same age as Edward Hartopp and two years younger than Sir John Cradock Hartopp. Among the heads of 24 leading Leicestershire gentry families

¹⁵³ Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p. 61.

at the end of the period, in the greater and middling categories, three did not marry and the status of two other is unknown. Fourteen of the 19 heads of family who are known to have married did so between the ages of 21 and 27. One married when he was 33, three were in their 40s and William Perry Herrick married when he was 68. Among their brides were three daughters of peers, another two whose fathers were senior military officers (one a General, the other an Admiral) and one clergyman's daughter. Only two of the nineteen married within the Leicestershire gentry. The remaining 11 found wives outside Leicestershire, five among identified gentry families and the remainder of unknown origin. The heads of wealthier gentry therefore cast widely in search of a bride, and were more likely to marry into the peerage than younger sons.¹⁵⁴ Distinct patterns existed however within families. Three generations of the heads of the Dawson family married into the local gentry. In contrast, none of the sixteen marriages of members of the Babington family between 1800 and 1875, 11 sons and five daughters, were to people from Leicestershire. The thirteen Burnaby marriages were varied: they included four to local landed families, one to a clerical peer, and two brothers who married their first cousins, sisters who were the daughters of John Atkins, a Tory MP with estates in

¹⁵⁴ An unusual exception was John Paget (1808-92), the younger son of John Paget (1773-1833) and the second cousin of Thomas Tertius Paget MP. He was an agriculturalist and writer who lived in Transylvania. He married Polyxene Bannfy, Baroness Wesselenyi, the former wife of a member of the Hungarian nobility (*ODNB*, 42, pp. 363-4).

Jamaica, and Anna Burnaby.¹⁵⁵ Marriages between cousins were rare but not unknown: Henry Halford, the son of the physician, Sir Henry Halford, formerly Vaughan, married his first cousin, Barbara Vaughan and his daughter Elizabeth married a cousin, Albert Pell (see below). Ashby Pochin (1845-1880), the second son of William Pochin (1820-1901) and Agnes Ashby, who married in 1871, were also first cousins. Ralph Pochin and Anna Winstanley, who married in 1855, were half third cousins; seven years later her family's property at Braunstone passed to her husband.¹⁵⁶

The overriding purpose of marriage was to secure the future of the family line and its property. This aim was formalised in a settlement between the two families which set out the amount of money each was to bring forward for the benefit of the couple, and how much was to put aside for annuities and for the provision of any children of the marriage. It was applied in the case of younger sons and daughters as well as the eldest son and (intended) heir.¹⁵⁷ If the marriage involved the latter, his family could make a separate family settlement, if it had not been done, for example, on the occasion of his 21st birthday. In 1872, when

¹⁵⁵ Thorne, 4, pp. 177-8.

¹⁵⁶ See chapter 4.

¹⁵⁷ For example, on the marriage of Edmund Packe, the third son of Charles James Packe, and Sarah Jane Mansfield in 1825 (ROLLR DE803/45), and the marriage of Selina Frewen, the daughter of John Frewen Turner MP to the Rev Robert Martin of Anstey in 1839 (ESRO FRE/41, 8 July 1839); see also chapter 3.

Hussey Packe married Lady Alice Woodhouse, daughter of the 1st Earl of Kimberley, a complex legal document renewed the terms of existing arrangements for the passing of the Packe family estates from one generation to another, and took into account the terms of wills of previous heads of the family.¹⁵⁸ Newer gentry families did not always adhere to the practices associated with 'strict settlement': the rift, mentioned earlier, between Thomas Tertius Paget and his brother John arose because there was no family settlement. Their father, Thomas, changed the terms of his will to give the major share of his wealth to the older son, Tertius, despite John's expectations that the more middle class approach, of sharing wealth between members of the next generation, would be followed.

If, however, a marriage failed to produce a son and heir, the cross-generational strategy could collapse, or at least require serious adjustment. It is possible to agree partially with Stone that "... the apparent stability of inheritance from generation to generation by males

¹⁵⁸ ROLLR DE/346/446, *Settlement of the Prestwold Estate on the marriage of Hussey Packe and Lady Alice Woodhouse*, 12 August 1872. It referred to the previous family settlement of 1821 made on the marriage of Charles William Packe to Kitty Jenkyn Hort (ROLLR DE 258/H/1), his will and that of his father, made in 1835. It was also customary for family friends, often among the local gentry to become trustees. In the 1821 Packe family settlement, Charles March Phillipps and Thomas Pares were nominated. However, C. W. Packe in his summary of the family's later disputes (see chapter 4), said they "were never asked whether they could undertake this impracticable duty, and were kept in ignorance of such a requirement" (ROLLR DE 1346/468, 1 October 1860).

of the same name is something of an illusion."¹⁵⁹ The estates of six of the 10 members who constituted the greater gentry in 1790 were inherited directly by a son, and one more failed in the male line in the next generation. But of the 11 members of the greater gentry at the end of period, including the Packe family, nine inherited their property from their father. This suggests somewhat greater family stability in the nineteenth century than previously and that the effects of the 'demographic crisis' of the landed classes detected by historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had finally been overcome. The changes of name required of a husband who inherited his wife's property because the male line of her family had failed also became progressively rarer in the second half of the period. Previously, changes of name had occurred in a variety of circumstances, including the inheritance of property from cousins or from a mother or grandmother's family (and unconnected with marriage) as well to take possession of an estate belonging to a wife's family.¹⁶⁰

An astute marriage could also lay the foundations for future prosperity in ways that could not have been initially foreseen.¹⁶¹ Marriage outside

¹⁵⁹ Stone, *Open Elite?*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁰ See chapter 3 for name changes before 1830. In the second half of the period, William Herrick became William Perry Herrick in 1853, on inheriting the estates of his maternal grandfather, and in 1862 Ambrose March Phillipps adopted his paternal grandmother's name of de Lisle on succeeding to the Garendon estate.

¹⁶¹ The experience of the Herrick family was noted in chapters 3 and 4.

the county was often the key to a transformation in fortunes. Three generations of the Hartopp family married women from landed families from outside Leicestershire in the nineteenth century. Edward Hartopp of Dalby Hall (1783-1813) inherited estates in Ireland through his mother, Julia Evans, the daughter of George Evans, the 3rd Baron Carbery. Edward married Ana Wrey, the daughter of Sir George Bouchier Wrey, and their son, Edward Bouchier Hartopp (1809-1884) built on these advantageous connections. He epitomises in all its essential aspects the world of a member of the greater gentry in the nineteenth century and the range of his family linkages. He was a pupil at Eton with William Gladstone, and matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford when he was 19, though he did not stay to take a degree. By the age of 23 he was High Sheriff of Leicestershire, a post traditionally held by a younger member of the gentry. A year later, he married Honoria Gent, the daughter of Major General William Gent and they had three sons and four daughters. He subsequently became a county magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant and from 1859-68 was a Conservative member for North Leicestershire. In London, he had a house at 23, Wilton Crescent, in Belgravia and was a member of the Oxford & Cambridge, Travellers and Carlton clubs. In his home county he was also the Lord of the Manor of Dalby and Scraftoft, the patron of two livings, and was the principal or sole benefactor for church

restorations at Potters' Marston, Humberstone and Scraftoft. His income on the eve of his death was £13,845, and his personal estate subsequently valued at £32,668 17s 4d. As a result of marriages made locally in previous centuries, Hartopp was related to some 15 Leicestershire landed families, including Ashby, Cradock Hartopp, Farnham, Pares, Paget, Noel, Curzon-Howe, Babington, Boothby, Pochin, Palmer of Carlton, Vaughan and Halford, Manners, Burnaby and Holden, as well as the Evans, Wrey, Palk, Adderley, Lowther, Middleton, Weld and Whitmore families from outside the county through more recent connections.¹⁶²

The widening of the circle of marriage beyond the local gentry was however no guarantee of greater influence or prosperity. Hartopp's cousins in the Cradock Hartopp family pursued an even more expansive marriage policy but ultimately had little to show for it. Sir Edmund, the MP and member of the University College Club, who began life as Edmund Bunny, married Ann Hurlock, the daughter of the former Governor of Bencoolen and a Director East India Company. His third but oldest surviving son, another Sir Edmund (1789-1849), who inherited Gumley Hall from Joseph Cradock, married Mary Eden, the daughter of the 1st Baron Henley. Mary's brother, Robert, was married

¹⁶² His grandson, Edward Shuttleworth Holden, who was born in 1865, and held 482 of his 2,028 acres in Leicestershire according to Bateman, was related to some degree to 550 people on the database of gentry and other landed families, 10.3% of the total.

to Harriet Peel, the sister of the future Prime Minister. Of Edmund's and Mary's three sons and six daughters, the eldest son and successor, Sir John William Cradock Hartopp (1829-1888), married the daughter of a nephew of the Duke of Norfolk, while his one daughter married a younger son of the Duke of Newcastle, and another, a son of the immensely wealthy Duke of Buccleugh. Others married into gentry families from outside Leicestershire, including the purchaser of Gumley Hall, Thomas Whitmore of a leading Shropshire family.¹⁶³ Only one married within the Leicestershire gentry, to Edward Farnham of Quorn, a county MP. Yet, on his death, Sir William, who had for thirteen years served as an officer in the 17th Lancers, left a cash estate valued at £333 17s 8d and owned just 2,181 acres worth £4,110 a year.¹⁶⁴ By contrast the marriage strategy of Ambrose March Phillipps de Lisle was arguably more successful in extending his connections and in support of his goal of reviving Catholicism in England. He married the daughter of a younger son of the Catholic Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. Among their children, two of their five daughters married into the peerage, one into non-Leicestershire gentry, one to Samuel Clowes, a Leicestershire MP from 1868-80, and one became a nun. Two of the husbands were prominent Catholics. The eldest son, Ambrose, married the daughter of

¹⁶³ See chapter 7.

¹⁶⁴ *National Probate Calendar*, Principal Probate Registry, and Bateman.

Sir Richard Sutton of Nottinghamshire and the former Master of the Quorn Hunt.

It is, as Habakkuk, wrote, a "hazardous enterprise" to "generalise about marriage at any period and in any social group since evidence about motives is scarcer and unreliable; and the motives themselves are usually complex."¹⁶⁵ Those unions that were the result of a dynastic arrangements between families and ones which might be described as love matches cannot easily be identified or analysed. Stone however has argued that one of the most significant changes in marriage occurred from 1700 onwards when the selection of a partner among the landed gentry and the middle classes was determined more by the free choice of individuals than on parental preference.¹⁶⁶ The rise of what he called 'Affective Individualism' may have contributed to the increase in the number of marriages outside the ranks of familiar local gentry families. The social circle of those who were chosen continued to be dominated by those of landed origins or with a socially 'sound' background such as the church, among whom were the younger sons of the gentry or nobility. Parental influence remained strong, however, as a example from the 1840s illustrates: Henry Halford MP intervened in 1843 to rebuff the 25-year-old Grey Hazlerigg, the younger brother of

¹⁶⁵ Habakkuk, *Estates System*, p. 146.

¹⁶⁶ Stone, *Family*, pp. 411-2.

Sir Arthur Hazlerigg, who had been making approaches to his only daughter Elizabeth, who was just 18.¹⁶⁷ Halford then subjected her eventual husband, the future county MP, Albert Pell, to interrogation about his income, which Pell was hopeful could be raised to £800 a year.¹⁶⁸

More women remained unmarried than men: 15.9% of females did not marry (23 out of 145), compared with 11.4% of males (23 out of 201). It is likely however that some of the 39 women and 58 men whose marital status is not known were also unmarried. Without taking them into account, the difference in the rates of marriage may reflect the greater opportunities enjoyed by men to meet a wider circle of acquaintances, beginning with their extended educational experience, and the problems of providing a sufficient dowry for the marriage of a daughter to the son of a high-ranking family.

Education, followed by an advantageous marriage, prepared the young country gentleman to take his place among an elite that was a national

¹⁶⁷ The sometimes heated exchange of correspondence between the families, from September to November 1843 is at ROLLR DG 24/1056/20,38,39,43.

¹⁶⁸ ROLLR DG 24/1056/42, DE/1056/56, *Letters*, 22 September 1843, 20 October 1843. Albert and Elizabeth were finally married in 1846 after her 21st birthday. The editor of Pell's autobiography, Thomas Mackay, noted that Elizabeth Pell was well-read but went little into society; instead she became a "keen and capable farmer", who managed the 300 acres her husband had leased in Northamptonshire from Sir Justinian Isham, while he was engaged in parliament (*The Reminiscences of Albert Pell*, p. 139). Grey Hazlerigg meanwhile resigned his commission in the army to become a Baptist minister in Leicester in 1850 (Venn, 3, p. 205).

network rather than a discrete, local community. He shared with landed families in other parts of the country, common material interests, a way of life and a set of values moulded by the experience of school and university and reinforced in public life and in the church and armed forces, as the following chapters will show.

7. The Public and Political Culture of the Gentry: i – Politics and Power

Engagement in public life, and the exercise of power and authority, was a defining characteristic of the gentry. During the general election of 1857, the Liberal newspaper, the *Leicester Chronicle*, declared "... that if the fabric of our commonwealth has for its walls and foundations the middle and working classes, and for the infrastructure the crown and the court, that the bulwarks of the building are most certainly the gentry."¹ This grandiose imagery reflected a political structure in which, since the medieval period, the gentry of Leicestershire had represented the county as Knights of the Shire in parliament, provided the bulk of its magistrates, high sheriffs and deputy lieutenants. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the modern historians of parliament noted that "the county representation was almost completely dominated by the country gentlemen," and overt aristocratic interference was resented, while in the borough the majority of MPs were "country gentlemen of a type indistinguishable from those who sat for the county."² Yet, as the *Leicester Chronicle* also observed, there was by the middle of the nineteenth century a discernable weakening of the gentry's position. The newspaper noted that two of the four county members came from

¹ *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 April 1857.

² Namier & Brooke, 1, p. 322.

aristocratic families and argued that "it is a reproach on the freeholders of Leicestershire, in the middle of the nineteenth century, that they cannot select two independent gentlemen without going on for them to Belvoir Castle or Gopsall Hall. We wonder the gentry have not sufficient pride and spirit to choose from among themselves candidates for the county representation."³ Thus, in the age of 'High Victorian Liberalism,' the gentry found itself not so much challenged in its own heartland by rising middle class businessmen, but cast as the junior partner of the aristocracy. Rather than working through nominees and sympathisers in the gentry as it had done previously, the nobility now preferred to take the lead to defend the interests of the landed classes as a whole.

This chapter examines the reasons for the gentry's transition from political predominance to incipient decline. It does not offer a narrative of the county's political history.⁴ Rather, it seeks to highlight some of the main underlying themes and developments over the period which affected the ability of the gentry to maintain its earlier supremacy. It argues that the gentry only partially adapted to changes in politics and

³ *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 April 1857. Belvoir Castle was the home of the Dukes of Rutland and Gopsall of the Earls Howe. In 1857, Lord John Manners (1818-1904), the 5th Duke's second son and later the 7th Duke, and George Howe, Viscount Curzon (1821-76), son of the 1st Earl, and later the 2nd Earl, were elected for North and South Leicestershire respectively.

⁴ See Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, for the county as well as the borough up to 1850; Simmons, *Leicester*; J. H. Plumb, *VCH*, 2, pp. 102-35, R. W. Greaves, 'The City of Leicester – Parliamentary History 1660-1835', *VCH*, 4 (1958) pp. 110-152; R. H. Evans 'The City of Leicester: Parliamentary history since 1835', *VCH*, 4, pp. 201-250.

society and that the seeds of its later social and economic decline were sown in the middle of the century, as authority drained away from it and reliance on its traditional networks proved inadequate to arrest a loss of influence. The examination of these networks, and their place in the public life of the gentry, will be a principal focus of this chapter; appendix VII sets out in diagrammatic form the range of the connections and forums open to the politically-engaged country gentleman across the period.

The Political Culture of the Gentry

In the eighteenth century land and power went hand in hand. Politics, as the pursuit of influence and the exercise of authority, was a game played by the landed rich. The political culture of the age was founded on the principle that landed men had both the right and the duty to govern: they had the most fundamental of stakes in the prosperity of the country and its efficient governance; their position bestowed on them a rightful, even divinely-ordained, authority that was rooted in the land itself and in the ancient shires. Landownership gave them above all an independence of thought and action, and enabled them to work through parliament, sometimes in equilibrium and sometimes in a state

of tension, with the other institutional pillars of the constitution, the monarchy, the Church and the law.⁵

In such a political world, pressure was applied, decisions made and power exercised, between a small number of players, among whom stood the gentry. The creation of tightly-knit networks of influence among the active participants was fundamental to the functioning of such a political system.⁶ The outcome of political manoeuvre and the allocation of position were determined by arrangement behind the scenes. Between 1747 and 1818, no general election in Leicestershire, and only one by-election, was contested. Its two county members were returned unopposed, one acting in the Rutland interest and one a Tory squire, agreed by consent, grudging or otherwise, between the main families and the acquiescence of an electorate of 5-6,000.⁷ In the borough, with its more sharply etched social and religious divides, contests were frequent. In both arenas, the gentry came to the fore, as candidates and sources of influence and support. In the absence of party organisation and open electoral battles, it was a political world - in the county at least - that was amply suited to landed classes who

⁵ See Langford, *Propertied Englishman*, Clark, *English Society* and David Eastwood, *Rural England*.

⁶ The work of L. B. Namier, in *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (1929) and *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (1930), has proved enduring as an analysis of the workings of this political system.

⁷ Romany Sedgwick (ed.), *History of Parliament - The House of Commons 1715-54*, 2 vols., (1970), 1, p. 274; Namier & Brooke, 1, p. 322.

worked through private circles of connection and interest. Politics was not, however, the occasional, compartmentalised and somewhat static activity sometimes depicted. It touched upon many aspects of the gentry's lives and was played out in a variety of forums. Political life utilised networks of family and social connections and relied upon the deep financial resources of the landed classes in securing election and to support the burdens of local office or serving in parliament. Other avenues were open to the leading players as part of the wider political process: the gentry summoned county meetings to discuss topics of immediate concern, newspapers carried its announcements and appeals for electoral support, as well as their own reports of political events, and opportunities for the discussion of political matters arose at business meetings, such as at boards for canal or railway development, or on charitable committees, and at the Quarter Sessions and Assizes, and might be raised discreetly at social gatherings, as far as etiquette permitted. For Members of Parliament and others with a house in the capital, London, as the centre of politics and government, offered its own array of social events and clubs for establishing political contacts and discussing issues.

From the 1790s, the shape of politics and the philosophical assumptions on which it rested began to change. Support for the Whig cause, which

had been led by the county's foremost aristocratic families and backed by a section of the gentry for much of the eighteenth century, fell away dramatically as the French Revolution descended into terror and war and the threat of Jacobinism emerged at home. The Whig-led Revolution Club, which was set up in Leicester in 1784 to commemorate the revolution of 1688 and support parliamentary reform, collapsed by 1792, with many of its leading supporters in the nobility and gentry transferring their allegiance to Pitt.⁸ Like its Tory counterpart, the Constitutional Club, which had been formed five years later, it was essentially a social rather than an electoral or campaigning organisation and provided a forum for like-minded nobles and gentlemen to meet. However, Whiggism did not die entirely among the Leicestershire gentry. It was sustained initially through stalwarts such as the radical Walter Ruding, until his death in 1820 and the Waterloo veteran, Colonel Cheney of Gaddesby, and found expression in campaigns such as that against slavery, which attracted support across the political divide in Leicester. The last of Whig-inclined MPs to represent the county, Charles March Phillipps and Edward Dawson, had gone by 1835 and it was not until 1867 that another Liberal, the banker Thomas Tertius Paget, served as a county member, and then for just one year. But, bereft of

⁸ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p. 64. William Gardiner said that under the Duke of Rutland's leadership the Whig cause had been supported by Danvers, Dixie, Hazlerigg, Packe, Hartopp, Pochin, Keck, Simpson, Winstanley and Pares among the gentry but most deserted it in the 1790s (Gardiner, *Music*, 1, p. 40-41).

aristocratic leadership, the Whiggism of the Leicestershire gentry failed to flourish into the age of Victorian Liberalism and it had no influence on a succession of Whig and Liberal governments, from Melbourne to Gladstone.⁹

The counterpart to the decline of the Whigs was the spread of Toryism, always a force among the ranks of the squires.¹⁰ It asserted itself first in the firm handling of protest and unrest, against Jacobins of the 1790s and the machine breakers of 1812, to the Chartists of the 1840s, when gentlemen led the Yeomanry and as magistrates read the Riot Act to suppress disturbances, and urged on successive Home Secretaries decisive action to put down malcontents who threatened the tranquillity of the countryside and the established order of society.¹¹ As will be discussed below, it evolved into an uncompromising brand of conservatism which became the defining political characteristic of the majority of Leicestershire gentlemen in the middle of the nineteenth century: anti-reform, Evangelical Anglican, protectionist, paternalist and

⁹ Southgate's analysis of Whig and Liberal ministers, members of Whig noble families who stood for parliament and the family connections of Whig and Liberal MPs revealed few with Leicestershire connections: exceptions were the Earls of Radnor and Bessborough, Richard Otway Cave, the former borough member who represented Tipperary from 1837-44, Henry Strutt, who became the 2nd Lord Belper, Frederick Tollemache, brother of the 8th Earl of Dysart and Richard Watson, brother of the 4th Earl Sondes (Donald Southgate, *The Passing of the Whigs 1832-1886* (1962)).

¹⁰ A similar pattern evolved in neighbouring Lincolnshire, for example, which had returned one Whig and one independent member for the county for 35 years, until the "Napoleonic war period saw the emergence of a body of tory sentiment among the Lincolnshire gentry." (Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics*, p. 91).

¹¹ See Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp. 104-22; Plumb, *VCH*, 2, pp. 126-7.

anti-liberal. They opposed the extension of the franchise in 1832 and were scarcely reconciled to it in 1867, and stood out against the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846. The Tory gentry was also suspicious of the interference, as they saw it, of central authority in matters of local administration, such as the new Poor Law and of the Inspectorates who, for instance, oversaw its prisons, although they accepted, albeit on the smallest scale possible, the establishment of a county police force.

Fundamental structural change worked against the interests of the gentry. After the 1832 Reform Act and the reform of municipal government three years later, the borough and the county came to inhabit separate political worlds. The rise of new economic forces and radical politics in Leicester, which represented the dissenting hosiers and manufacturers, spelled doom for the gentry influence in the borough. It had been signalled for some time: the first radical Liberal elected for Leicester was John Pares in 1818. But after 1832, no member of a leading Leicestershire gentry family represented it in parliament throughout the remainder of the period and, except for two lapses which allowed in Tories for brief periods from 1835-7 and 1861-2, the borough became solidly Liberal, represented by a variety of radical manufacturers and merchants, and lawyers and newspaper proprietors, many of whom came from outside Leicestershire.

Changes in the style of politics – in the terms of political debate and the manner in which politics was conducted – also acted against the gentry. The world of intimate politics in which the gentry flourished, where electorates were small and elections rarely contested, was fading. As noted previously, the framework of the ‘county community’ became weakened: the political gulf between borough and county, the splitting of the single county into two parliamentary divisions, the increased number of electors, the registration of voters, the scrutiny of public business by a more confident, expanding press, the adoption of candidates from outside the county, which the borough had been practising since the 1780s, and the increasing intervention in local administration by central government, all contributed to its erosion. The gentry was less agile in its response to these challenges than the nobility, and its resources more limited. Some local noble families, richer and encouraged by the aristocratic hold over national government, intervened directly in a way they had not a hundred years before – as the *Leicester Chronicle* had critically observed.

The increasing numbers of voters undermined the viability of the old closed politics. Before the 1832 Reform Act, there were around 6,000 electors in the county. Immediately afterwards, it rose to 8,050 in the

two divisions of the county, and to more than 9,200 by 1852. After the 1867 Reform Act, the south Leicestershire electorate alone was just under 6,000.¹² These numbers were not conducive to the settlement of elections by nomination and arrangement privately among the landed classes. Nor could landlords rely on tenants' votes, even before the advent of the secret ballot in 1872.¹³ What was increasingly required was efficiency of organisation, adequate funding, and the skills to conduct sustained campaigns of propaganda and electioneering. The gentry Tories could provide some of these ingredients but not all. Since the days of the Constitution Club they had continued to meet, but more usually for self-congratulatory and social reasons than serious political business. The Pitt Club had been its main such forum in the county. Established in 1815 with Lord Robert Manners MP as its President and John Mansfield as Treasurer, it continued into the 1830s, attracting nobility and gentry as well as lesser figures to its annual dinners. After 1832, as the Tories began to adjust to the new political reality, local Conservative Associations based in the main market towns were set up and an Operative Society in the borough formed to attract middle and

¹² Figures from Return of Number of Electors, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1836, cmd. 199; Charles Dod, *Electoral Facts 1832-1853* (1853); *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book 1832-1918* (reprinted 1971).

¹³ D. C. Moore, *The Politics of Deference – a study of the mid-nineteenth century English Political System* (Hassocks, 1976), argued that "deference networks" continued to work in rural rather than urban areas. However, C. H. Frewen admitted to Thomas Tertius Paget in 1867, that when his brother had stood for south Leicestershire in the 1830s "one of his tenants voted against him, but he was always treated in the same way as all the other tenants on the property" (ROLLR, DE 365/325, *Letter*, 16 Nov 1867).

working class support. In Leicestershire as in other counties these bodies became a vehicle for the revitalisation of the Tory cause under Peel, whose Manifesto issued at Tamworth in the neighbouring county of Staffordshire, redefined Conservatism for the post-reform era.¹⁴ Their dinners were attended by impressive numbers of nobles and gentry and were sometimes reported in the national as well as the local press.¹⁵ Alongside the customary affirmations of loyalty to Monarch, Church and Parliament, speakers emphasised the importance of new requirements in electoral politics such as the registration of voters.¹⁶ This work fell away however in subsequent decades, when the Conservatives – whose Leicestershire representatives broke with Peel after 1846 and remained overwhelmingly committed to protectionism - were confined to long periods of parliamentary opposition. By the end of the period alarm bells were ringing. In April 1874, the two South Leicestershire members, Albert Pell and W. U. Heygate, wrote from the House of Commons to C. W. Packe's nephew, Charles Packe of Stretton Hall, to

¹⁴ Robert Stewart, *The Foundation of the Conservative Party 1839-1867* (1978); Cragoe, Matthew, 'The Great Reform Act and the Modernization of British Politics: The Impact of Conservative Associations 1835-1841', *JBS*, 47, (2008), pp. 581-603.

¹⁵ For example, the north Leicestershire Conservative dinners held in Loughborough (The Times 27 April 1838) and at Ashby de la Zouch (The Times 16 January 1841), the south Leicestershire Conservative dinner attended by "upwards of 500 gentlemen" (The Times 18 September 1840). The patron of the Ashby de la Zouch Conservative Association in 1841 was Earl Howe and its President Sir George Beaumont, with a dozen or more gentry as Vice Presidents.

¹⁶ C. W. Packe, one of the members for South Leicestershire, urged the importance of attending to registration (The Times, 27 April 1838). Lord Charles Manners MP repeated the exhortation (The Times, 18 September 1840) and the following year north Leicestershire Association passed a resolution stated that the Conservative ascendancy in the county "can only be maintained by a vigilant attention to the registration." (The Times, 16 January 1841).

ask for his assistance in putting the “unsatisfactory condition” of the Registration Fund of the constituency’s Conservative Association on a “more reliable footing.”¹⁷ In his reply, Packe said that he had “a very strong objection to association for political purposes” and that “government by party is these days carried much too far.” He objected to payment for political activities arguing that “paid contributions to keep up the registration partake much of the character of bribery.”¹⁸ He was simply not interested in a mode of politics that, with the further reforms of 1867, was shifting inexorably beyond the control of the landed classes.

The style of reformed politics, of enlarged electorates, organised parties and mass communications, of the world of Cobden, Bright and Mill, which called into to question the assumptions that linked the hereditary ownership of land to the levers of political power at the national as well as the local level, was inimical to the gentry. The gentry was at odds with the very ethos of Victorian Liberalism. It stood as the defender of an older order, of the landed interest against that of business and the countryside against that of the town. There remained a basic community of interest with the aristocracy, who came to the forefront of political life. But the gentry appeared to be on the losing side, with the

¹⁷ ROLLR DE 5047/127/1-3, *Letters*, April 1874.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*.

tide of events running against it. Not only was the gentry out of step with 'new' politics, it was beginning to find that it could not altogether successfully manipulate the 'old' politics advantage either, working in its customary fashion through discrete networks of influence.

The Leicestershire Gentry and Parliament

The unreformed political system of the eighteenth century had served the gentry well. Its local networks of inter-family connections and private social meetings offered a wholly adequate frame of reference. As noted above, the majority of those who represented either the borough or the county of Leicester in parliament came from the ranks of local gentry. That remained so in the forty or so years between the start of the period under study and the passage of the 1832 Reform Act.¹⁹ In the corresponding period after that date, from 1832-1874, the local gentry vanished altogether from the list of borough representatives

¹⁹ The landed classes continued to provide the majority of MPs of all parties: in the parliament of 1841-47, which repealed the Corn Laws, 234 MPs out of 815 members who served for some part of that period (28.7%), were listed in Burke's *Landed Gentry* or were their sons, 129 were baronets or their sons (15.8%), 180 were peers' sons (22.1%), 115 were related more distantly to those categories (14.1%) and 157 were unconnected to them (19.3%) (W. O. Aydelotte, 'The Business Interests of the gentry in the Parliament of 1841-47,' in G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, (1962), pp. 290-305). Among Liberal backbenchers between 1859 and 1874, 198 were large landowners, 49 were "gentlemen of leisure", and 84 were lawyers (J. R. Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1857-68*, (1976), pp. 26-7).

and by 1868 from the county also. The following table summarises the declining numbers of gentry members:²⁰

Table V: Parliamentary Representation in Leicester Borough and County 1747-1874.

1747-89	Local Gentry	Peers' Sons	Connected Outsiders	Unconnected Outsiders	Total
County	6 (75% of county)	1	0	1	8
Borough	5 (56% of borough)	1	1	2	9
Total	11 (65% of total)	2	1	3	17

1790-1831	Local Gentry	Peers' Sons	Connected Outsiders	Unconnected Outsiders	Total
County	7 (88%)	1	0	0	8
Borough	5 (56%)	0	1	3	9
Total	12 (71%)	1	1	3	17

1832-1874	Local Gentry	Peers' Sons	Business & Professions	Connected Outsiders	Unlinked Outsiders	Total
County	8 (50%)	5	0	3	0	16
Borough	0	0	4	2	9	15
Total	8 (25%)	5	4	5	9	31

Although these figures suggest a strengthening of the gentry's position in the county from the end of the eighteenth century until the first

²⁰ This is compiled principally from Namier & Brooke, Thorne, and Michael Stenton, *A Who's Who of British Members of Parliament, 1832-85* (Hassocks, 1976). 'Local gentry' includes new entrants as well as older established families. 'Connected outsiders' denotes those individuals who had some family or property connection with Leicestershire but had not previously been a part of the county gentry. 'Unconnected outsiders' are those with no links to the borough or county.

Reform Act, significant changes were underway. First, the Dukes of Rutland became more assertive in the county's political life as they switched from their former role as leaders of Whiggism in the county to arch-proponents of the Conservative cause espoused by the majority of the gentry. Their change of allegiance served to increase their importance in county politics as the gentry fell in behind them. This reversed the posture struck by the Rutland family for most of the eighteenth century when it acted through nominees in the gentry. Between 1719 and 1734 Lord William Manners, a son of the 2nd Duke, was one of the two county members, but he resigned and the family left the field to Tory squires for the rest of the century. This pattern stood in contrast to that in some neighbouring counties. In Nottinghamshire, for example, the Dukes of Newcastle and Portland had most say in county elections and Portland had returned his brother from 1775 to 1820.²¹ In Derbyshire, between 1754 and 1790, six of the Cavendishes, the Dukes of Devonshire sat in the commons, in one seat for the county and one for Derby.²²

Only after 1806 did the Manners family again put forward one of its number to represent the county and, with one 18-month gap, it

²¹ Thorne, 1, p. 313.

²² Namier & Brooke, 2, p. 200.

maintained this hold for the remainder of the period.²³ In the interim, the Manners had been building up their position gradually, to become the county's leading noble family, acquiring more land and embarking on a programme of enclosure and improvement.²⁴ After the death of the 4th Duke in 1787, his widow, Mary Isabella Somerset, the daughter of the 4th Duke of Beaufort, endeavoured to secure the family's political future on behalf of her three sons, who were born between 1778 and 1781. In 1798, after consulting her brother, Henry, the 5th Duke of Beaufort, she agreed to adopt Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp, the former Edmund Bunny, as the new member in the Rutland interest.²⁵ She pursued his candidacy with great vigour, one of numerous aristocratic women of the period who were skilful political hostesses and manipulators.²⁶ The Dowager Duchess wrote to peers and local gentry and secured the endorsement of at least nine peers, including the newly ennobled Lord Carrington, the brother of Samuel Smith, one of the Leicester borough members from 1790-1818. Among the gentry, backing came from Clement Winstanley, the former Revolution Club President, Charles Lorraine Smith of Enderby, who was one of the leaders of the Constitutional Club, the colonel of county Yeomanry, Sir

²³ Of Leicestershire's neighbours, Northamptonshire followed similarly, with representation in the hands of country gentlemen from 1748 until 1806, when a son of the Earl Spencer was elected a county member. (Thorne, 2).

²⁴ Between 1760 and 1800 more than 20 villages in which the Duke of Rutland was the sole or main owner were enclosed (*Parliamentary Enclosure Acts*).

²⁵ ROLLR 10D72/567, Letter from the Duchess, 27 September 1798, offering him "the entire support and interest of the Rutland family."

²⁶ Chalus, *Elite Women*

William Skeffington, Sir Thomas Apreece, who was married to the daughter of Shuckburgh Ashby, a Leicestershire MP in 1784, and was a nephew of George Wrighte, a borough MP from 1727-66 and the Rev. Dr. Andrew Burnaby, the Archdeacon of Leicester. The Duchess took her campaign to the very top of politics. William Windham, the War Secretary, and a fellow member with Sir Edmund in the University College Club, replied to say that Pitt himself would be in touch with her.²⁷ After eight years in Westminster, Sir Edmund's relationship with the Manners' family - and with the local gentry – became soured and he withdrew in favour of Lord Robert Manners, who was now 25 and was effectively being transferred to his home territory having served as a member for Scarborough for four years.²⁸

Never again did any Leicestershire gentleman allow himself to become such an obvious pawn of the nobility, nor did the Dukes of Rutland attempt to act through a nominee. Except for a short break between 1831 and 1832, when his opposition to parliamentary reform saw the seat pass to a Liberal member of the gentry, Lord Robert held the seat until his death in 1835, when his younger brother, Henry, took over for

²⁷ ROLLR 10D72/566, *Letter from the Duchess to Hartopp*, 4 October 1798; see previous chapter for the Club.

²⁸ Sir Edmund moved from Leicestershire to Four Oaks Hall in Warwickshire (Joshua Wilson, *A Biographical Index to the Present House of Commons*, 1806) and his involvement in Leicestershire affairs became much reduced: although he sat occasionally on the Grand Jury of the Assizes he did not appear at the Quarter Sessions after around 1808.

the next seventeen years. He was followed in succession by two further family members as MPs for the North Leicestershire division. By contrast, the influence of some other long-standing aristocratic families in the county declined. The Shirleys, the Earls Ferrers, had to bear the shame in 1760 of the execution of the 4th Earl for murdering his steward. The Earldom of Huntingdon, Tory rivals of the Rutlands, fell into abeyance after the death of the 10th Earl in 1789 and the line of succession became the subject of dispute, which was only settled by the House of Lords in 1819.²⁹ Robert Sherard, (1719-99) the 4th Earl of Harborough, although an active supporter of canal building, was a “relatively undistinguished cleric” of a family “on the way down”, who inherited the title late in life and never played a major political role.³⁰

Equally, as the Manners family was planning its political offensive, the gentry was itself suffering a crisis of leadership. As noted in Part One, several established gentry families played little or no active part in county business, in a parliamentary or magisterial capacity, a contrast to some other midland counties where parliamentary dynasties were well established.³¹ In Leicestershire, it was thus left to fresh families to

²⁹ J. M. Lee, ‘Castle Donington in the Nineteenth Century’, *TLAHS*, 32 (1956), p. 59.

³⁰ Nigel Aston, ‘An eighteenth century Leicestershire Squarson, Robert Sherard, 4th Earl of Harborough’, *TLAHS*, 60 (1986), pp. 35-46.

³¹ In Northamptonshire an Isham represented the county from 1698 to 1772 (Thorne, 1, p. 297) while in Shropshire seven generations of Whitmore were MPs (see Namier & Brooke, Thorne and Stenton). Both families had connections with Leicestershire. In

assume parliamentary roles. Penn Assheton Curzon, who inherited the Gopsall estate from his uncle, Charles Jennens in 1773, was an MP from 1792-96; George Legh Keck, whose grandfather had inherited the Stoughton estates of the Beaumont family through his wife in 1737 and whose father was a borough MP from 1765-68, was a member from 1797-1818 and 1820-31, and Charles March Phillipps, MP from 1818-20 and 1831-35, was the son of Thomas March, who had assumed the name of Phillipps in 1777 when he succeeded to the Garendon estate of his cousin, Samuel Phillipps. Only two other county members came from an old, that is pre-eighteenth century, Leicestershire gentry family: Sir Thomas Cave, MP from 1790 until his death two years later, and William Pochin, who was MP from 1780 until he died in 1798.³² Like Curzon and Keck, Pochin was a Pittite, and had the backing of the Rutland interest. Phillipps was a Whig, together with the final gentry member for Leicestershire before 1832, the rising banker, Thomas Paget. Few of the gentry however had voted for Paget when he first

1867, Thomas Whitmore, the son of Thomas Whitmore MP, the purchaser of Gumley, who married the sister of Sir John Cradock Hartopp. He became High Sheriff for Leicestershire in 1875. The Ishams owned estates in Leicestershire and married into several local gentry families.

³² Pochin's cousin, Charles Pochin, was the member for Iniskillen from 1807-1812. He was one of several MPs connected to the Leicestershire gentry who sat for seats outside the county: other included Thomas Frewen Turner of Cold Overton, MP for another Irish seat, Athlone, from 1807-1820, Sir Francis Burdett (1770-1844), the member for Boroughbridge from 1796-1807 and Westminster from 1807-37, who was imprisoned in the Tower of London for a breach of parliamentary privilege (see *ODNB*, 8, pp. 737-41), and Richard Norman, the county High Sheriff in 1811, who was MP for Bramber from 1804-1806 and was married to Elizabeth Manners, a daughter of the 4th Duke of Rutland (see Thorne, 4, pp. 673-4).

contested the seat in 1830 – the first fully contested county election since 1775.³³ While none of these county members can be said to have had distinguished parliamentary careers – some never spoke in the House – they were able to promote or follow the progress of private Bills and matters which affected the county, relating, for example to canal development and enclosure.³⁴

In the borough, the gentry continued to provide just over half its MPs from 1790 up to 1832. However, those with business connections, with their own powerful networks, were at an advantage: three of the five gentry members were bankers, and of the four others, two were outsiders in business and one was a Nottingham banker whose family had previously owned property in Leicestershire. The anti-slavery campaigner, Thomas Babington, held one of the two borough seats alongside Samuel Smith, one of four MP brothers from the highly successful banking family. Babington also had banking interests, as a partner of his successor in the borough, John Mansfield, a former Mayor of Leicester, the county Receiver General for Taxes and an active magistrate.³⁵ Mansfield represented the borough from 1818 until 1826

³³ His supporters included Charles March Phillipps, John Pares, E. H. Cheney, Jacomb Hood of Bardon Park, T. E. Dicey and the former Tory borough member, Robert Otway Cave (*Poll Book*, County of Leicester, (August 1830)).

³⁴ Cradock Hartopp, for example, was responsible for a stream of local Bills (Langford, *Propertied Englishman*, pp. 200-1).

³⁵ See chapter 8.

as a Tory, together with another banker turned gentleman, the radical Thomas Pares. The other two gentry members for the borough during this period were Sir Charles Abney Hastings of Willesley Hall, the son of Lt. Gen. Sir Charles Hastings, and Robert Otway-Cave, the nephew of the former county member, Sir Thomas Cave. The pair were chosen by the Tory Corporation, who enrolled 800 members of the gentry and nobility as Honorary Freemen of the borough and spent £15,000 on the election in 1826 to secure victory over two reformist candidates. Once elected, Otway Cave refused to pay his agreed share of the expenses and voted in favour of Catholic relief, a major issue in the campaign, which his sponsors believed he had undertaken to oppose. The Tory old guard in the corporation felt themselves betrayed as well as out of pocket. The affair was a major factor in contributing toward Leicester's reputation as a corrupt borough, leading directly to the demise of the old Corporation and its overthrow in 1835.³⁶ It also created some lasting disenchantment among Tories in the town with the old gentry. After the 1832 Reform Act, which increased the borough electorate from something over 2,500 to just over 3,000, and the reform of municipal government three years later, the old Leicestershire gentry never again provided an MP for the town. During the following 40 years the nearest

³⁶ R. W. Greaves, *The Corporation of Leicester* (1939) and 'Roman Catholic Relief and the Leicester election of 1826', *TRHS*, 22 (1940), pp. 199-223; also *Records of the Borough of Leicester 1689-1835*, 5 & 7, (1965) for correspondence between Otway Cave and the Corporation and the *Report of the Municipal Corporations Commissioners 1835*.

the gentry came to having one of their own in a seat was in 1861, when William Heygate, who had various Leicestershire connections, was elected as a Liberal Conservative over a divided radical party.³⁷ Otherwise, the dissenting Liberal manufacturers were firmly installed as Leicester's new political elite.

In the county, eight of the 16 members between 1832 and 1875 came from the local gentry. Four served for short periods, three immediately after parliamentary reform: Charles March Phillipps, who lost his seat in 1837, and a fellow Liberal, Edward Dawson of Whatton (1832-35), the Tory Thomas Frewen Turner of Cold Overton Hall, the son of the member for Athlone, who resigned in 1836 because of ill health after only a year in the Commons, and the Liberal, Thomas Tertius Paget (from 1867-68). The other four were all long-serving Tories: Charles W. Packe of Prestwold Hall, who was a member for South Leicestershire from 1837 until his death thirty years later; Sir Henry Halford of Wistow, MP for the same division from 1832-57; and the North Leicestershire

³⁷ Thomas Gladstone, the brother of W. E. Gladstone, and Edward Goldbourn, the Recorder of Leicester under the unreformed corporation from 1820-35, held the borough for the Tories from 1835-37. C. H. Frewen and Sir James Parker QC of Rothley, the son-in-law of the former borough member, Thomas Babington, were the only Conservative candidates between 1839 and 1859. Heygate was the son and brother of Tory MPs and the grandson of James Heygate, who was a banking partner of Thomas Pares. He lost the seat four years later and briefly became the member for Stamford before representing South Leicestershire for ten years from 1870. (see Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, and Evans, *VCH*.) His local credentials were underlined by the ownership of 275 acres including Roecliffe Hall and marriage to Constance Beaumont, the daughter of Sir George Beaumont, the 9th Baronet, and sister of the 10th.

members, Edward Farnham of Quorn, from 1837 until 1859 and, taking his place, Edward Hartopp of Dalby Hall, from 1859-68. These four were traditional country gentlemen: none had any significant business or professional interests, in three cases their families had been long associated with the county, they were related to other members of the gentry and were prominent in other aspects of county business. They exemplified the prevailing conservatism of the early Victorian gentry. They all voted against the repeal of the Corn Law in 1846 with the other county member, Lord Charles Manners.³⁸ Farnham referred to the Anti-Corn Law League as "an insidious but open foe."³⁹ Halford however softened his position so that by the 1852 general election, he declared that he did not support the restoration of the corn laws.⁴⁰ On various occasions, Packe and Farnham voted against Roman Catholic relief and against the funding of a Catholic seminary at Maynooth in Ireland, a cause celebre of the time.⁴¹ But Halford and Charles Manners broke ranks to support the latter. Halford showed his broad paternalism in other ways, endeavouring to improve the lot of the framework knitters, who represented a substantial part of the county's industry and had for many years suffered from falling wages and poor working conditions.⁴²

³⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, 27 March 1846, 3rd series, LXXXV, cols. 265-9.

³⁹ At a meeting of the Ashby de la Zouch Agricultural Society, *LJ*, 16 Jan 1846.

⁴⁰ *LJ*, 16 July 1852.

⁴¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 April 1845, 3rd series, LXXIX, cols. 1042-45; see Norman Gash, *Aristocracy and People* (1983 edition), pp. 231-3 for a summary of the case.

⁴² He introduced two Bills to help the framework knitters, both of which failed.

But he was resolutely opposed to the setting up of county police forces (see the following section). Resistance among the county members to further measures of parliamentary reform was unstinting and when the question again came onto the agenda under a Liberal government in 1866, Packe, Hartopp and Viscount Curzon stood firmly against it.⁴³

Of these figures, the career of C. W. Packe reveals most about the underlying attitudes of the old gentry. For more than thirty years he remained at the centre of the county's public and political life, as an MP and Chairman of the county magistrates.⁴⁴ An arch-protectionist, he was a fervent defender of agriculture and the landed interest against business and manufacturing. In 1851 he wrote to his brother George Hussey Packe, that "our free trade rulers have got us 'clodhoppers' into a pretty mess."⁴⁵ He had read that a clothier from Huddersfield was to retire and posed the rhetorical question: "how many County noblemen and Gentlemen with a long existing hereditary property have also

⁴³ *Parliamentary Debates*, 27 April 1866, 3rd series, 183, cols. 152-6.

⁴⁴ Packe was a supporter of the Leicestershire Agricultural Society, a director of the Midland Counties Railway, subscribed to the Protestant Truth Society (*LJ*, 6 November 1835), Vice President of the Ashby de la Zouch Conservative Association (*LJ*, 3 November 1837), Market Harborough Dispensary Ball (*LJ*, 18 January 1838), patron of the Leicestershire Floral & Horticultural Society (*LJ*, 18 June 1841), supporter of the Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge (*LJ*, 6 August 1841), the Church Extension Society and the Loughborough & Ashby Protestant Tract Society, (*LJ*, 17 November 1843), Agricultural Protection Society (*LJ*, 16 January 1846), President of the Loughborough Agricultural Society (*LJ*, 25 October 1844), President of the Loughborough Literary & Philosophical Society (*LJ*, 30 November 1849), patron of the Leicestershire Fine Arts Society (*LJ*, 14 December 1849), and chairman of the Midland Institute for the Blind (*LJ*, 5 April 1850).

⁴⁵ ESRO DE1346/431, 24 Sept 1851.

retired?" For him there were obligations and responsibilities attached to other ownership of land which did not apply to other classes in society, an echo of the eighteenth century notion that bestowed upon the independent landed gentleman the special roles of governor and legislator. Packe however had his enemies, and on his death the *Liberal Leicester Chronicle* described him as "essentially a narrow, unprogressive, reactionary spirit", while conceding he was "eminently useful and assiduous in the prosecution of county business" and in his integrity and trustworthiness, "in many respects he exemplified some of the best qualities of the English county gentleman."⁴⁶

The end of the hard-line Tory domination of county politics was marked by a series of bitter contests. On four occasions between 1857 and 1868, Charles Hay Frewen made unsuccessful attempts to win the North Leicestershire seat as an independent Protestant Conservative. He was the younger brother of Thomas Frewen, the South Leicestershire member from 1835-6, and had been the member for East Sussex for eleven years from 1846. He was fervently opposed to the influence of the Manners family and 'old' style politics. His contest with Edward Hartopp in 1859 was particularly intense: the victorious Hartopp accused Frewen of a "malicious, though absurd, attack on my honour"

⁴⁶ *Leicester Chronicle*, 2 November 1867.

and the Tory *Leicester Journal* declared that he had “placed himself in a position which deprives him of the sympathies of gentlemen of every political complexion.”⁴⁷ Between 1857 and 1859 he lost what little support he had among the landed classes.⁴⁸

By 1868, the dominant figures of the previous decades had departed the scene and the demands of political life demanded also a new type of candidate. The Conservatives had been caught out by the Liberal, Thomas Tertius Paget, who advertised himself as a figure who spanned the worlds of land and business.⁴⁹ He captured a South Leicestershire seat following the death of Packe in 1867 and although he held for only a year, his success highlighted the Tories’ problems. Someone whose interests were primarily local or wholly based on land was not enough. The borough radicals had understood this from early on and the majority of their successful candidates were from outside Leicester and unconnected with the town. The Tories adopted a half-way approach. They called in outsiders with some local links, such as Albert Pell, a London property owner who was married to his cousin, the daughter of

⁴⁷ *LJ*, 29 June, 5 August, 1859. His nephew, Moreton Frewen MP, described him as “a pompous and futile person” (Frewen, *Melton Mowbray*, p. 16). Despite all, C. H. Frewen served as High Sheriff for the county in 1866.

⁴⁸ Some lesser and fringe gentry had voted for him in 1857 (*Poll Book*, 1857) but none did two years later; his support came mainly from Tilton, Syston and Loughborough, (*LJ*, 13 May 1859).

⁴⁹ In his election address in 1867, he said that “while connected with the landed interest and mainly dependent myself upon land, I have for a lengthened period been in daily and constant intercourse with those concerned in trade and commerce..” (ROLLR DE 4795/10, *Leaflet*, 7 November 1867).

the late MP Sir Henry Halford,⁵⁰ Colonel Samuel Clowes, who was married to Sophia Sutton, the daughter of Sir Richard Sutton, a former Master of the Quorn Hunt,⁵¹ and William Heygate, mentioned above. They held more moderate, modernising views. Pell, an independent-minded Conservative who was involved in poor law administration, retained South Leicestershire from 1868-1885 and Clowes was a Conservative member for the Northern division until 1880. While Heygate had connections dating back several generations, Pell owned only a small amount of land in Leicestershire, and Clowes none at all, according to the Return of 1873. In both their cases wider political and family connections proved more important than landownership in the county in deciding their suitability as a county member. Thus, networks of political and business life outside Leicester were intertwined with traditional ones of marriage and family to bring forth a more plausible brand of Conservative politician, who might appear reassuring to the gentry and appeal to the growing electorate.

Electoral politics were also becoming more expensive. It had always been so, but in the eighteenth century, nobles and gentry from the whole county could fall in behind the two agreed candidates; now

⁵⁰ In his memoirs, he said that his candidature was not enthusiastically received by the county's landlords.

⁵¹ He was also related to Edward Holden, was married to the daughter of George Moore of Appleby. In 1863 their son, the Rev. Charles Holden married the daughter of the previous member, Edward Hartopp (see previous chapter).

resources were divided between two divisions (with most of the wealthier gentry in the north) in contested elections and the peerage families were funding their own candidates. John Manners was said to have spent £6,000 on electioneering between 1857 and 1859, the annual income of all but a handful of gentry.⁵² Charles Frewen boasted however that he had been putting away £2,000 a year for some years, enough he said, for a good many contests.⁵³ Albert Pell recorded in his memoirs that he had spent £2,324 in the 1867 election, which he lost to Thomas Paget, whose spending ran to £3,513.⁵⁴ An assiduous member was also expected to spend more time in London. As an alternative to a residence there, membership of a club such as the Carlton for Tories and the Reform for Liberals was more practical and opened up a potentially extensive range of contacts.⁵⁵

The very small number of county gentlemen were able to use their family and other networks to gain access to a national arena in parliament diminished towards the close of the period. The wider gentry's claim to authority found expression however in another vehicle, one more closely connected with the day-to-day affairs of the county:

⁵² *LJ*, 3 July 1859.

⁵³ *LJ*, 29 April 1859.

⁵⁴ *Reminiscences*, p. 202. Of Pell's expenditure, £1,020 went to his agent.

⁵⁵ See the previous chapter. Of those not earlier mentioned, MPs, William Pochin, George Legh Keck, Charles March Phillipps, Edward Hartopp, Edward Farnham and Henry Halford all had houses in the west end or Mayfair. (Stenton; *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, various from 1833; *Royal Blue Book*, from 1830, and *Kearsey's Pocket Ledger* 1803, used by John Frewen as his diary (ESRO FRE/763)).

through the equally ancient office of Justice of the Peace a potentially larger circle of gentry had the opportunity to govern the populace at large.

The Gentry and the Magistracy

Nothing expressed so directly and tangibly the local power and status of the gentry than its place in the magistracy. It was in the view of one historian "the instrument of their control" in the county.⁵⁶ Through the administration of justice and an array of regulatory mechanisms, the gentry governed rural society in many aspects of its daily life. As expressions of this power, and each with their own forms and rituals, the Quarter Sessions and the Grand Assizes also marked fixed highpoints in the calendar of county life. They were a vehicle for the execution of official business and an arena for the informal discussion of topical matters with colleagues, members of the peerage and clergy, and others, lawyers and men of business, who might also have an interest in the conduct of affairs. In these ways, the magistracy constituted one of the gentry's principal networks of influence and authority within their home territory.

⁵⁶ K. Zangerl, 'The Social Composition of the Magistracy in England & Wales 1831-87', *JBS*, (1977), pp. 113-25.

Yet, by the mid-nineteenth century, the tradition of self-government was vanishing.⁵⁷ The power of magistrates became progressively circumscribed by central government, and was exposed to public scrutiny through the press and to criticism from radicals. A loss of control over some areas, such as the poor law, was offset by the emergence of additional responsibilities, such as those for the establishment and maintenance of a county police force. In the process, the role of the magistrates became an increasingly managerial one: autonomy gave way to accountability. New justices were appointed from outside the ranks of established county landowners to shoulder the burden of business. On occasion, the external pressures to which justices were subjected had the effect of reinforcing their sense of shared interest, but they also exposed policy and personal divisions among them. The gentry could no longer treat the bench as a self-contained network of mutually supporting interests.

This section examines these developments as they affected the gentry in Leicestershire. It draws on the published attendance lists of a sample of 80 meetings of the Quarter Sessions from 1790-1875 (23.3% of a maximum possible total of 340), and 61 Assize Grand Juries (35.5% of the total), together with official published lists of the names of

⁵⁷ Eastwood, *Rural England*, p. 261.

magistrates and newspapers reports of its proceedings during the second half the period. These sources have been used as the basis for measuring the degree of the gentry's involvement, how the social composition of the magistracy changed, how it conducted its business, and to assess the extent to which the magistracy continued to form an important part of the gentry's social and political networks.

At the beginning of the period, few of the gentry participated actively as magistrates and the clergy played a more prominent part. The withdrawal of the landed classes from involvement in routine county business in the early eighteenth century has been much discussed and has variously been attributed to a retreat from the public sphere by Tory squires, the decline of paternalism and the self-indulgent lifestyle of many aristocrats who preferred to be in London than the shires.⁵⁸ By the end of the century, the numbers who attended the Quarter Sessions in Leicestershire were at a low level, according to the lists of those present in the *Leicester Journal*: attendances averaged 10 people in the 1790s, but as social tensions rose, so too did the involvement of magistrates in their duties.⁵⁹ In the following decade, the numbers rose to around 15 and exceeded 20 by the end of the Napoleonic Wars. But

⁵⁸ Perkin, *English Society*, pp. 283-96.

⁵⁹ Langford *Propertied Englishman*, pp. 405-6, argued that in the 1770s and 1780s, interest was stimulated by variety of factors including the militia, renewed election contests, demands for parliamentary reform and social issues

more clergymen than gentry attended the Quarter Sessions: in January 1794 there were just four gentlemen and six clergy and October 1811 seven gentry and 12 clergymen. In the four Sessions for 1814, a total of 37 people attended, of whom 14 were from the gentry and 23 were clergymen, some of whom had landed connections; noble families and baronets were completely absent during that year. The burden of work fell in the first half of the period on a few individuals, from the clergy and the middling and lesser gentry, such as C. G. Mundy, who was chairman in the late 1820s.⁶⁰

As the gentry became more active in the magistracy, it became for several decades across the middle of the century one of its most important networks within the county. At the same time the role of the clergy and to a lesser extent the peers declined. The pattern of representation can be measured in the data for the numbers and backgrounds of magistrates contained in periodic parliamentary returns on the justices for each county. Exactly how many magistrates there were at one point is however not altogether certain. A distinction has to be made between the number on paper, the number of those who had taken the oath of qualification and were therefore able to act, and those

⁶⁰ Mundy was High Sheriff in 1824, a President of the Pitt Club and the grandson of Wrightson Mundy, a Leicestershire member from 1747-54. His name had been suggested as a possible MP in 1818 but he rejected the idea on the grounds that he owned insufficient land in the county.

who attended for duty. In 1836 a parliamentary paper named 245 magistrates for the county, of whom 28 were peers or sons of peers (11.4%), 21 were baronets (8.6%), 126 were from the untitled gentry (51.4%) and 70 were clergymen (28.6%).⁶¹ In 1842 a new paper added four new peers, two baronets (including one cleric), 16 gentlemen and two more clergy.⁶² By 1856, in another parliamentary return, William Freer, the Clerk of the Peace, stated that there were 366 persons named in the Commission of the Peace, which had been drawn up in November 1847. However he added that "many of the noblemen and gentlemen named therein have since died, while the names of others have been added; but I have no means of ascertaining the exact date of each addition."⁶³ The returns showed that there were between 73 and 77 qualified magistrates between 1852 and 1854, of whom 62 had sat at the regular Petty Sessions. These met in eight separate locations around the county either weekly or fortnightly, depending on the amount of business, usually with between one and four magistrates present, to hear minor cases and deal with administrative and regulatory matters.⁶⁴ Attendees included three peers, the Earl of Lanesborough in the Loughborough Division, Earl Howe in Market

⁶¹ *List of Persons appointed to Act as Justices of the Peace*, PP, Cmd. 583 (1836).

⁶² *Return of all persons appointed to act as Justices of the Peace*, PP, Cmd. 524 (1842).

⁶³ *Returns Relating to Justices of the Peace*, PP. (1855).

⁶⁴ Only in Ashby-de-la-Zouch was there difficult in finding magistrates: it was noted in the return that meetings were formerly held weekly but in view of the problem in securing two magistrates they had latterly taken place on alternate Saturdays.

Bosworth and Lord Berners in East Norton, two sons of peers and two baronets, Sir Arthur Hazlerigg and Sir Frederick Fowke, and three MPs, including C. W. Packe. All levels of the gentry were represented. Others included 11 clergymen, including three out of the four magistrates in the busy south western Lutterworth division in 1852 and 1853. Thus, of these 62 active magistrates in the early 1850s, three quarters came from the gentry. They now also dominated the Quarter Sessions: in April 1844, for example, 13 members of the gentry attended, including four baronets, with six clergy and two peers. Approximately five could be said to represent newcomers or lesser gentry. In January 1854, the numbers were 12 gentry, two clergy and one peer.

Some comparison on the composition of the Leicestershire magistracy can be made with other parts of the country. Analyses made by Shorthouse of the gentry in Northamptonshire from the list of 1836, and nationally, by Zangerl, on a sample of counties for 1842, reveal some considerable variations:⁶⁵

⁶⁵ R. W. Shorthouse, 'Justices of the Peace in Northamptonshire 1830-1845', *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, 5, 1974, pp. 129-40; Zangerl, 'Composition of the Magistracy'.

Table VI: Social Composition of the Magistracy, 1846 & 1842.

	Leicestershire (1836)	Northamptonshire (1836)	Nationally (1842)
Peers	11.4% (28)	10.4% (44)	8.4%
Baronets	8.6% (21)	3.1% (13)	
Squires/Gentry	51.4 (126)	44.3% (187)	75% (including baronets)
Clergy	28.6% (70)	38.9% (164)	13.4%

The figures for the numbers of peers and their sons who were magistrates are broadly comparable. Both Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, however, show larger numbers of clergy than the national picture suggests, at the expense of the gentry. In Leicestershire, this may be partly explained as a legacy of the reliance on the clergy in view of the inconsistent degree of engagement by the gentry in the first half of the period. Northamptonshire was one of a number of east and midland counties which had up to 40% of clergy magistrates by 1832.⁶⁶

By the end of the period, there were indications of changes in the composition of the magistracy. In the last of the parliamentary returns, in 1887, Zangerl found the gentry made up 68% of the county justices nationally, with the aristocracy falling to 6.2% and the clergy down to

⁶⁶ These included Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire (Langford, *Propertied Englishman*, pp. 410-420). Some of the clergy were the younger sons of landed families, or were connected by marriage. See also chapter 8.

5.3%. Some 20.3% came from the middle and professional classes. The Leicestershire figures suggested higher totals for peers and clergy continued despite a decline: in 1887, 174 magistrates were named for Leicestershire, of whom only 16 were clergymen, down from 28.6% in 1836 to 9.2%, and 13 were peers (7.4%). Recruitment to the magistracy extended to draw in increasing numbers of loosely-linked outsiders or newcomers to the county, those at the fringe and sub-gentry levels and some who possessed no land in the county at all. Of a total of 85 magistrates appointed before 1875 and who appeared in a parliamentary return of the names of justices serving in 1887, 18 (21%) were not listed as landowners at all in Leicestershire in the return of 1873. Of those 18, some 12, plus seven others, lived outside the county.⁶⁷ The role of the magistracy as a network for the gentry and clergy was becoming less relevant than the ability to perform a required role.

This pattern was reflected in attendance at the Assizes. The greater gentry and baronets had traditionally been more likely to join the Grand Jury at the County Assizes than attend Quarter Sessions. The Assizes were held twice a year, at Lent and in the Summer, and heard the most serious criminal cases under a Circuit Judge. The Grand Jury of at

⁶⁷ *ROL, and Return of Names and Professions of Justices of the Peace for the Counties of England and Wales, June 1887, PP, Cmd. 356 (1888).*

least 23 members decided which cases would go forward for trial before a jury picked from local freeholders. The occasion also presented an opportunity for members of the gentry, and other locally prominent figures, to meet socially, at the associated dinners, for example, as well as formally. In the sample of 61 Grand Juries at the County Assizes, 217 individuals attended, of whom 22 were baronets (10.1%), and seven (3.2%) were peers. There were no clergy. The majority came principally from established members of the gentry, with most of the leading families represented at some time, including Beaumont and Herrick, who did not attend the Sessions. George Turville attended twice, in 1833 and 1846, the only member of his family to do so throughout the period. Towards the end, however, those who owned 1,000 acres or more were in the minority, as newcomers, outsiders, professionals and 'gentlemen' with little land were enlisted for duty, a further indication that the possession of a large estate was less important than willingness to serve and the potential to make a useful contribution to proceedings: of the 42 individuals who made up three Grand Juries in a sample between 1873 and 1875, only 16 owned more than 1,000 acres in the county.

Overall, the gentry's engagement with county affairs through the magistracy was patchy. A small number of individuals sometimes

struggled to provide adequate numbers for the proper functioning of the Quarter Sessions and Assizes and to carry the burden of an increasing work load. At any one time, a pool of between 30 and 40 gentlemen was required for the Quarter Sessions and Assizes. In 1852, 36 gentlemen attended the two County Assizes and the Quarter Sessions: 19 attended the Assizes only, 13 attended both at least once and a further four attended the Sessions only. The failure on occasion to provide what was considered adequate representation was commented upon in the press and by Assize judges.⁶⁸ In 1856, only 17 people presented themselves at the summer County assizes, six short of the required number for the Grand Jury. Mr Justice Coleridge said that he was sorry so small a number of gentlemen had attended out of the 60 who had been summoned.⁶⁹ Some families did not involve themselves in the work of the magistracy at all or very rarely. Sometimes there was no available member. In other cases there was a disinclination to serve, for reasons which cannot altogether be explained, or were a legacy of some attitudes of non-participation rooted in the eighteenth century. In the sample of meetings of the Quarter Sessions, there was for example no Hazlerigg before 1818, no Dixie or Fowke until the 1820s, no Packe or Babington until the 1830s and no Hartopp or Halford until the 1840s.

⁶⁸ See *LJ*, 8 April 1842.

⁶⁹ *Leicester Chronicle*, 21 July 1855. The following year 22 came and the judge commented that he was "pleased to see such a numerous and respectable attendance." (*Leicester Chronicle*, 8 Mar 1856).

The Phillipps dropped from any participation shortly after 1820 and no member of the Beaumont, Cave, Farnham, Herrick, Neville, Turville or Morris families attended a Quarter Sessions in Leicestershire throughout the whole period. Few of the latter are likely to have served on one in another county.

The administrative and financial work of the magistrates increased over the period as the legal and structural context underwent great change. This fundamentally affected the way the gentry could use the magistracy for its own social and political interests. All responsibility for the Poor Law was taken away from justices under the 1834 Act.⁷⁰ Many of their miscellaneous duties relating to licensing, weights and measures, roads and bridges remained and much of their work, in addition to the traditional role of dispensing justice, centred on prisons and the new county police force. Magistrates dealt with these matters at the Quarter Sessions and were responsible for rising amounts of money. In 1832 the county's receipts were £18,256 and expenditure was £17,325.⁷¹ Ten years later expenditure had risen to £23,148 and the next year to £28,353, as a result of expenses on the gaol and the policing of disturbances.⁷² By 1857, income had risen to £28,1555, of which £18,265 came from the rates, with the difference made up mainly

⁷⁰ Hilton, *England 1783-1846*, p. 591.

⁷¹ *LJ*, 12 April 1833.

⁷² *LJ*, 7 April, 30 June, 1843.

from government loans. The county spent £25, 502, of which £7,467 went on the police and £6,720 on prisons.⁷³ The following year it borrowed £3,600 for the policing and £2,800 for a new lunatic asylum, bringing its receipts to £35,958 and expenditure to £30,204. Previously, accounts had been audited by a small group of magistrates and signed off by C. W. Packe as County Treasurer, but a Committee of Finance was now set up to oversee the handling of these increased sums of money. The staffing and structure of the magistracy had been evolving towards a greater professionalism for some years, with the appointment of a salaried Clerk of the Peace and magistrates themselves forming sub-committees for some areas of business: boards of visitors to the lunatic asylum and prison were set up and their chairmen delivered formal reports at the Quarter Sessions.⁷⁴ Financial accounts were published in the local press and the discussions which took place at the Quarter Sessions were reported in detail from the early 1840s, exposing differences of opinion to public view.

Although criticism from without could strengthen the resolve of the gentry, it could also expose differences of opinion among them. Radicals challenged the authority of the landed classes to exercise

⁷³ *Leicester Chronicle*, 26 December 1857.

⁷⁴ C. W. Packe was chairman of the Visitors to County Lunatic Asylum, (*LJ*, 10 Nov 1837); Sir Arthur Hazlerigg and Sir Henry Halford MP were Visiting Justices to the County Prison, (*LJ*, 18 Oct 1844). See also Eastwood, *Rural England*, pp. 54ff.

unelected authority through the Quarter Sessions and social reformers questioned their routinely harsh justice.⁷⁵ Indeed, the Leicestershire magistrates acquired a lasting reputation for severity. On two occasions in the 1840s, the Home Secretary was drawn into disputes. In 1847, two years after he released two Leicestershire people who had been gaoled (with hard labour) for the non-payment of sums of 5s 4d and 3s 4d in poor rates,⁷⁶ he became involved in the affairs of the Loughborough magistrates. A woman had been imprisoned for 14 days for the non-payment of costs of £1 18s in a case involving a minor dispute and “an exchange of words” with another woman, to which a further 9s had been added on her imprisonment. The case eventually found its way to a Special Jury at the County Assizes, under Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp and with Edward Hartopp as one its members, which found against the magistrates for wrongful imprisonment and awarded damages against them of £15 in addition to an earlier sum of £5 which had been paid into the court.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Zangerl, ‘Composition of the Magistracy,’ p. 121; Eastwood, *Government and Community*, p. 121.

⁷⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, LXXVIII, 2 April 1845, col. 1389-96.

⁷⁷ *LJ*, 26 March 1847. One of the magistrates was the 85-year-old Rev Dr John Dudley (1762-1856), the Vicar of Humberstone and Sileby from 1795. He was a friend of the Frewen family and domestic chaplain to the Marquis of Exeter. He was a controversial figure and once sentenced two men to six months’ gaol because their attorney called him ‘Esquire’ instead of ‘Reverend,’ even though they had produced evidence to show they were elsewhere at the time of the theft with which they had been charged. This case was the subject of a leader in *The Times*, 21 October 1845. Dudley was expelled from the Pitt Club in 1818 for criticising the Duke of Rutland.

Magistrates were increasingly made accountable to official scrutiny. Inspectorates oversaw their work concerning prisons, asylums and the police. A more serious challenge to the county justices came in 1854 in the form of a Royal Commission to investigate the condition and treatment of prisoners in the County Gaol. It found that although the surgeon had failed in part of his duties, "no grave personal imputation rests upon any of the persons concerned in the government of the Leicester County Gaol."⁷⁸ The report came as a relief to the magistrates and Sir Henry Halford declared that no blame could be attached to any individual and in any event "a house of correction should not be converted into a mere school of instruction."⁷⁹ Sir Henry was also a long-standing opponent of the creation of county police forces. In 1839 he had written a pamphlet attacking the 1839 Rural Constabulary Act as an attack on liberty and voted against the 1856 Bill to make their establishment compulsory.⁸⁰ Although he was overruled by his fellow magistrates and Leicestershire became one of the first counties to form its own county force in 1839, it was limited on the

⁷⁸ *Royal Commission to inquire into Condition and Treatment of Prisoners in Leicester County Gaol and House of Correction, Report & Minutes of Evidence*, Cmd. 1808 (1854).

⁷⁹ *LJ*, 20 October 1854.

⁸⁰ Sir Henry Halford, *Some Remarks on the Report of the Constabulary Force Commissioners* (1839); see also D. Philips & R. D. Storch, *Policing Provincial England 1829-1856*, 1999, pp. 148-50; Philip Rawlings, *Policing – A Short History* (Cullompton, 2002), p. 134.

grounds of cost to a force of only 24 officers, the lowest of any of the county forces.⁸¹

Other county-based public offices associated with the gentry, which in some ways retained more of their traditional character, also became more devoid of any real power. The High Sheriff, an annual royal appointment from a list of three names put forward by the previous holder of the office, presided over parliamentary elections, escorted the judge to court on the occasion of the county Assizes and convened county meetings. While the latter declined in frequency and importance after 1832, an indicator of reducing role of the traditional 'county community', they did not vanish entirely.⁸² The post was unpopular because of the high level of expenses involved. In his year of office, from 1835-36, William Herrick spent a net total of just over £733, of which the Under Sheriff's account came to nearly £324.⁸³ For what was in many aspects a ceremonial post, the job carried some potentially heavy liabilities: John Goodacre, High Sheriff in 1849-50, was pursued for £1,781 damages from a man whose debt he had been asked – and had failed – to collect. After several years of wrangling, Goodacre

⁸¹ Philips & Storch, *Policing*, pp. 198-9. They noted that by the 1830s a "considerable section of the landed classes had lost faith in the old constabulary." (p. 53).

⁸² One county meeting was summoned by 57 peers and gentry in 1857 to raise money for relief in India following the mutiny, and another in 1866 to control an outbreak of cattle plague (*LJ*, 17 October 1857, 26 January 1866). In Lincolnshire, the parliamentary division of the county after 1832 also presaged the demise of the county meeting. (Olney, *Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire*, p. 184).

⁸³ ROLLR DG9/2239, *Expenses of Shrievalty, 1835*.

avoided paying the whole sum but as the *Leicester Chronicle* remarked: "The High Sheriff paid a very high price for the honour of escorting the judge to the Assizes.... we are not surprised that the shrievalty should be felt to be so equivocal a favour when conferred upon a country gentleman."⁸⁴

Despite these pitfalls, the gentry continued to fill the post of High Sheriff. In the 100 years from 1780-1880, except for four occasions when it was held by the son of a peer, the office was occupied by a member of the county gentry or on a handful of occasions by land-owning professionals or businessmen. Within the landed classes the net was cast widely to embrace new entrants as well old families and lesser and fringe gentry as well as the major landowners: the banker Richard Mitchell who bought Enderby Hall was High Sheriff in 1841-2, one year before he was declared bankrupt. The appointment sometimes went to a young member of an old family: Edward Hartopp was 23 when he took up the office in 1832, and Sir Willoughby Dixie, in 1843, Sir George Palmer in 1840, and James Winstanley in 1862, were all in their twenties. It was also a way of drawing in those who did not regularly participate in county affairs: Jacob Franks served as Sheriff from 1814-15, and Ambrose de Lisle from 1868-9. The other main public office

⁸⁴ *Leicester Chronicle*, 19 April 1856

held by members of the gentry was that of Deputy Lieutenant. This was notionally an assistant to the Lord Lieutenant of the county. The latter remained the preserve of the aristocracy: the Lord Lieutenants of Leicestershire from 1714 to 1900, consisted of five Dukes of Rutland, one Duke of Beaufort and General Earl Howe.⁸⁵ In 1846 he had 20 Deputy Lieutenants, including two peers, four sons of peers, one baronet and 13 untitled gentlemen, drawn from all levels of the gentry, and in all but two cases, from long-established families.⁸⁶

At the beginning of the period, the gentry had a seemingly secure grip on the parliamentary representation of the county, but many among its upper echelons were detached from local affairs. By its end, the reverse applied. Of 12 leading members of the gentry in the mid-1870s, 10 were magistrates in Leicestershire and two in other counties, nine were known to have been Deputy Lieutenants, and nine had served as High Sheriffs in the county and two elsewhere. Of the 10 who owned 2-3,000 acres and held most of their land in Leicestershire, nine were county Justices, six had been High Sheriffs and four Deputy Lieutenants. Yet, of those 22, just two had at some time served as MPs. In the previous 40 years parliamentary politics had slipped from the gentry's grasp. In contrast, the magistracy and the other main public offices which the

⁸⁵ W. G. D. Fletcher, *The Lord Lieutenants of Leicestershire*, (Lincoln, 1902), pp. 12-13.

⁸⁶ *White's Gazetteer* 1846.

gentry held within the county, provided forums for them to meet and form local connections and alliances, and to continue to exercise some authority on their own home territory. These positions provided a reassuring affirmation of its status and identity at its very roots; they were a necessary bedrock in a changing world and gave the gentry some sense of security. But, even in this area, the ground was shifting. Although, during the middle two quarters of the nineteenth century the gentry's role in local affairs had flourished, the manner in which it was able to conduct county business changed greatly. The social composition of the magistracy was subtly changing and accountability was threatening the notion of gentry 'independence' and of the autonomous 'county community'. The philosophical foundations on which the authority of the gentry rested, of a natural oligarchic order of society, in which land was equated with power, were crumbling. In numerous practical ways, the position of the gentry was slipping away even in its heartland. Its marginalisation on the parliamentary front, and its concentration on its historic county offices, represented a partial withdrawal by the gentry to its home base. Yet, in other ways, through education, marriage and through its engagement with the professions, its influence and connections became increasingly diffused.

8. The Public Culture of the Gentry: ii The Church, the Professions and Business

Throughout the period, members of the Leicestershire gentry maintained, and in some areas extended, their long association with institutions such as the church, the army and the law. This chapter considers changes in the nature and degree of this involvement, how it served the gentry in the defence and advancement of its interests, and what it reveals about their values and how far they adapted to the shifting foundations of wider society. In particular, it argues that these bodies and professions provided the gentry with a variety of interlocking networks and connections in the county and more widely, which they sought to exploit in endeavouring to retain their status. As Penelope Corfield has written, the professions provided a “network of contacts” for practitioners, which linked them across the country, not only in the conduct of business, but in clubs and societies and at functions where professionals met to exchange news and gossip.¹ Such knowledge and connections were the lifeblood of the effective landowner who was in command of his family’s finances and a prominent participant in public life.

¹ Penelope Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (1995), pp. 214-5.

As the basis of this analysis, data had been gathered on the professional interests of 270 males, taken from the sample of 28 Leicestershire gentry families cited in previous chapters. It has shown that a clear majority embarked on a career or achieved a professional qualification. The results are summarised below:

Table VII: Professional interests of members of Leicestershire gentry families, 1790-1875.²

Clergy	59 (21.9%) ³
Military (excluding reserve forces, eg. Yeomanry or Militia)	42 (15.5%) ⁴
Law (called to the Bar or solicitors)	23 (8.5%) ⁵
Banking	10 (3.7%)
Medicine	3 (1.1%)
Universities (academic & staff posts)	4 (1.5%)
Overseas (eg. East India Company)	10 (3.7%)
Other	4 (2 civil servants; 1 schoolteacher; 1 farmer)
TOTAL WITH PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS	155 (57.4%)
NONE (OR NOT KNOWN)	115 (42.6%)
TOTAL	270

² Sources: BPB and BLG (various), Bateman, Walford, Fletcher, Venn, Foster, and Clergy, Army and Law Lists.

³ Another two clergymen took university appointments and are listed under that heading.

⁴ One, Sir Henry Halford MP, the son of the physician, also served briefly as a diplomat. A further three men who spent a short time in the army went onto other professions and are listed under those.

⁵ At least another eight members of these families attended one of the Inns but were not called to the Bar.

The figures show that the Leicestershire gentry's involvement varied from profession to profession. Just under 80% of those who qualified for or followed a profession during the period adopted one of the three areas traditionally associated with the landed classes: the church, the military and the law, with the former accounting for 38% of the total. From the French Wars onwards, however, the military gained in status and respectability, and provided openings in its officer ranks for an increasing number of young men from the gentry as well as from the nobility and middle classes, in a pattern which continued throughout the nineteenth century. Service in the army or navy offered the prospect of travel, which was also sought directly by a small number in posts overseas, often in the Indian military or civil service. Fewer entered the law than either church or army, and members of the gentry were less inclined to enrol at one of the Inns of Court than in earlier periods. For the aspirant gentleman, however, the law continued, as it had in previous centuries, to serve as one of the main paths towards the accumulation of the wealth needed to acquire landed status and it provided a knowledge that was of direct use to a country gentleman in his role as a magistrate or in managing the complex legalities associated with family and estate business. At the beginning of the nineteenth century especially, when regional and county banks were mushrooming,

finance also drew in the upwardly mobile, alongside a very small number of members of the existing gentry who saw the potential for augmenting their incomes, in a high risk sector.

Entry into a profession did not however always entail a lifetime's commitment. Many of those who completed their legal studies and were called to the Bar did not regularly practise as barristers, if at all; and few military officers remained in service long enough to rise above the rank of major. More demanding, and increasingly rigorous professions, such as medicine, drew in but a handful and newer ones, such as engineering or others with a technical base, appear to have held no appeal for sons of the gentry. Neither is there any indication that members of established gentry families engaged actively in the running or financing of local industrial or manufacturing enterprises. Outside banking, entrepreneurial risk-taking was little evident among those who had achieved gentry status in the first half of the period or earlier. Professions and occupations were conceived in the traditional terms of the landed classes with their heavy emphasis on public service and in positions of authority and influence in the institutions of the state. This further reinforced the innate conservatism of many of the gentry in its view of the dynamics of economic activity and of the structures of government and society.

The findings indicate that more owners of smaller estates sought other sources of income to support their landed status than the owners of the largest estates. The need to follow an occupation was dictated by economic necessity for younger sons and small estate owners, and a more generalised ambition, which might influence older as well as younger sons, to perform some productive or socially 'useful' task in a rapidly evolving, less sympathetic society. Secondly, the figures show that younger sons were more likely to take up a profession than the eldest, who was destined to become the head of the family, but it was not uncommon for the expected heir to acquire some professional experience before inheriting his estate. The proportion of heads of Leicestershire gentry families at the end of the period who had professional or business interests was however lower than for that in the sample set out above, which included younger sons. Only four heads of greater gentry families had professional experience: two in the law and one each in the army and banking. Among the lesser gentry, a slightly higher proportion – 14 out of 34 - had a professional or business background, with four lawyers and the rest in the clergy, the military or business. Overall, the number of qualified lawyers (seven) and of military officers (six), were higher than the total of clergy (two), who it is clear came mostly from among the younger born.

It was therefore not unusual for a nineteenth century country gentleman to pursue a profession for a part of his adult life. Through the professions, the gentry was able to extend its influence and ethos in many areas of local and national life. The minority who remained purely as 'gentlemen,' living wholly off rental income and without other occupation, included many who occupied positions of authority in the county, as active magistrates, yeomanry or militia officers and at least 14 Members of Parliament. Thus, even this element of the gentry was not entirely composed of idle or socially detached 'backwoodsmen'. Nor were they necessarily cut off from professional influences within their own families. The head of a family might count among his brothers, uncles and cousins, men who had wider experience as an MP, army officer, churchman or lawyer. Added to the local roles of magistrate and yeomanry officer, these linkages provided an array of mutually reinforcing networks and connections which might inform and assist the country gentleman in the conduct of his affairs and his endeavours to maintain the family's social status. The traditional definition of a 'gentleman,' as one who had no occupation, was however breaking down. The distinction between the unoccupied elite and others who also laid claim to the status of gentleman, in an urban context or the owners of small estates purchased with the results of business of professional activity, was becoming blurred.

The Gentry and the Church

The gentry's connections with the church were more extensive than for other institutions and professions with it touched on more aspects of their lives. Members of the gentry were to be found not only as the incumbents of (usually) rural parishes, or occasionally as more highly ranked clergy in the structure of the Church of England. They were patrons who held the power to appoint those same vicars and rectors, on occasion from among their own families; they were benefactors in church building and restoration projects, and they lent their names to numerous religious charities and campaigns.

As discussed earlier, the church provided the foundation of the gentry's moral and social codes and held a central place in its public and political activities. It also helped shaped the lives and relationships of gentry families. Clerical positions opened up an avenue of advancement that provided for the security and usefulness of sons who did not expect to inherit the family's estates, and the clergy provided a source of suitable potential husbands for daughters, particularly for younger ones and for fathers who could not offer a substantial dowry. As a prospect for a career or a marriage the church had other attractions. Generally, clergymen were cultivated, educated individuals (if human nature

sometimes determined otherwise)⁶. Up to the middle of the century, in the right country parish, they could live comfortably and might have the opportunity of holding more than one living and devolving routine duties to a curate.

Together, gentry and clergy attempted to transmit their shared principles through the administration of justice as well as from the pulpit. The magistracy, with its strong clergy presence, as discussed in the previous chapter, was an instrument through which the church and the landed classes could work together to enforce a shared code of morality and discipline (albeit with mixed success in either sphere). If the squire was also the patron he could ensure that the incumbent was a man who reflected his own views; or better still was a member of his own family. Thus the private and the public interests of the gentry in ecclesiastical matters converged. The sense of an over-arching social order and hierarchy was also expressed in the fabric of the church building itself. As a presence in a community, the parish church, perhaps restored or rebuilt as a result of the gentry's munificence, stood as a physical symbol of the intertwined spiritual and temporal authority of a local landowner who might be at once clerical patron, lord of the manor and magistrate. Plaques, monuments and memorials of past

⁶ For example, Dr. Bewicke of Hallaton Hall, who rarely preached and scandalised his parishioners by forming an association with a local widow, (Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 163).

landowners, and tributes to their munificence and deeds of public service lined the walls of the building. The seating of the local squire and his family in a prime position in church, set apart from the generality of the congregation, acted as another symbolic reminder of their status and its endorsement by their ecclesiastical partners.

Reforms within the Anglican church that began in the 1830s contributed to a weakening of the gentry's position in the church. Individual lay patronage was reduced, plural livings came under attack, the training of the clergy improved and the management of church affairs through the dioceses modernised.⁷ The numbers of gentry-clergy fell from the levels reached in the previous century and a half. Previous research has found that the numbers of Leicestershire clergy who came from gentry backgrounds had risen from the early eighteenth century. Pruett calculated that in 1670, 15% of Leicestershire clergy came from the gentry, rising to 21% in 1714, with a further 7% who were the sons of 'esquires' or above.⁸ Harratt found that 21.7% of Leicestershire clergy in the period 1786-1812 came from the gentry and above (that is, some were from noble families).⁹ And, for the early Victorian period,

⁷ See Knight, *Church and Society*, Arthur Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999) and Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (1984).

⁸ J. H. Pruett, *The Parish Clergy under the later Stuarts – The Leicestershire Experience* (Illinois, 1978), p. 35.

⁹ S. R. C. Harratt, *Leicestershire Parish Clergy during the Archidiaconate of Andrew Burnaby 1876-1812*, University of Leicester, MA dissertation (1983).

Rimmington identified 32 resident incumbents who lived “like wealthy country gentlemen.”¹⁰

However, further examination of the 1873 *Return of Owners of Land* has shown that the number of clergy from gentry families had fallen markedly from those levels. At the end of the period, some 23 vicars and rectors of parishes in the county came from the gentry, or themselves owned land worth £1,000 a year, out of a total of 188 (12.2%). Distinction can be made between these two categories: clergymen who owned sufficient land to be considered part of the gentry in their own right, and ones who owned little or no land but were sons of the gentry, typically non-inheriting younger sons. The landowning clergy, the descendants of the eighteenth century ‘squarson,’ the parson who was also a squire, consisted of 17 individuals: two members of the lesser gentry, only one of whom held a parish in the county, and 15 in the fringe gentry, of whom eight were incumbents of a Leicestershire parish.¹¹ They were the beneficiaries of the legacy of enclosure and the commutation of tithes into land, which was strongly evident in the midlands.¹² Clerical income alone however would not have supported

¹⁰ G. T. Rimmington ‘Early Victorian Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire’, *Midland History*, 27 (2002). pp. 99-111

¹¹ The one was the Rev Gerald Fenwicke (see Chapter 5). His father, George, was described as a “High Churchman” and a “thorough-going Conservative.” (Rimmington, *Incumbents*, p. 106).

¹² Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 295ff.

this number of well-to-do parish clergy. In Leicestershire in 1877, only six livings were worth more than £1,000, and another 21 were worth more than £600 (16% of the total in the county). Some 85 (43%) stood between £300 and £600 and 81 (41%) were under £300.¹³ The 23 gentry-connected parish clergy Leicestershire comprised nine of the above incumbents, (Fenwicke and eight from the fringe gentry), eight others who were members of local gentry families, the Baptist minister Grey Hazlerigg, (the only member of gentry family in the county known to have been appointed to a post in a non-conformist church), and five local clergy who were the sons of gentry families from other counties. In addition, seven other clerical members of Leicestershire gentry families held posts elsewhere, including one, the Rev. Dr. Edward Cradock Hartopp, who was the Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford, and is listed in table VII as the holder of an university appointment. The gentry's continuing entry into the clergy was founded on some long-standing traditions within particular families. Of the 59 clergymen in the sample of 28 families over the whole period, 31 (53%) came from just four families: Babington (six), Burnaby (13), Marriott (seven), and Palmer of Carlton (five). In contrast, several prominent gentry families, such as those of Frewen, Herrick, Winstanley and Fowke and the

¹³ Rimmington, 'Late Victorian clergy income: the Leicestershire evidence', *East Midland Historian*, 9 (1999), pp. 13-19. See also, Haig, who argued that on the basis of an official breakdown of wills by occupation as well as value for the year 1858, that the clergy at that date were "clearly among the better-off professional men" (p. 313).

Unitarian Pagets, produced no clergymen at all. Among them however were patrons and significant contributors to church building programmes and charities.

Overall, the number of gentry patrons fell across the middle of the century but remained a feature of gentry-owned rural parishes. In the early Victorian period, Rimmington found that there were more patrons from gentry-type backgrounds than the nobility: 42% of Leicestershire parishes were under the patronage of untitled landowners, compared with 29% for the aristocracy and 15% under the Crown.¹⁴ As late as 1877, 27 Leicestershire incumbents were also the patron.¹⁵ Although the attack on plurality had had some effect, it persisted so that at the end of the period, 36 members of the Leicestershire gentry held the patronage of parishes in the county (19.1%).¹⁶ Patrons also used their position to exclude those whom they considered doctrinally or socially objectionable. In 1852, Thomas Frewen sought to acquire the advowson of Sapcote to avoid a Tractarian getting the position and objected to a new incumbent of Cold Overton because he was not a gentleman and his wife's sister was married to a publican who was a

¹⁴ Rimmington, 'Victorian Clerical Incumbents'.

¹⁵ Rimmington, 'Victorian clergy income'.

¹⁶ Derived from the *Clergy List* (1876). See Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II 1860-1901* (1970), pp. 207-14; Knight, pp. 158-9, Haig, pp. 249-51, for patronage. The proportion of Anglican clergy who came from landed backgrounds fell across the middle of the nineteenth century from 10.3% in 1841-3 to 7.6% in 1871-3 (Haig, p. 36).

former tenant.¹⁷ Over the years, Frewen spent £14,475 in buying advowsons, in Leicestershire at Melton Mowbray, Hinckley, Queniborough and Stony Stanton as well as Cold Overton, Sapcote, at Brede in Sussex and in County Galway in Ireland.¹⁸

Philanthropic endeavour was expected of the gentry. It derived partly from the long-standing paternalism of the landed classes and the sense of community they tried to foster within rural society and partly reflected their Christian faith. Regular winter-time donations of small sums, or supplies of food or blankets, to help distress in economic slumps, and sometimes organised by wives and daughters of the landed classes, continued into the 1840s.¹⁹ Peers, the gentry and townspeople supported major national campaigns which captured the public imagination, such as one in 1857 to raise money for those who had suffered in the Indian mutiny.²⁰ The gentry also continued to make annual subscriptions to Leicester Infirmary, as well as to other institutions, such as the Leicestershire and Rutland Lunatic Asylum and

¹⁷ ESRO FRE/3332, copy *Letter*, 29 January; ESRO FRE/3335, copy *Letter*, 16 April 1852.

¹⁸ ESRO FRE/327 *Memorandum of additions to estates*, 1854; FRE/581 *Bank Accounts*.

¹⁹ At the end of 1840, Edward Hartopp gave £10 – an annual donation – for the poor of Melton Mowbray, Sir Geoffrey Palmer provided a dinner of beef and ale for the prisoners of Leicester Gaol on Christmas Day, and the Marquis of Hastings paid for 100 gallons of soup for the people of Castle Donington. (*LJ*, 1 January 1841). Later that year sums of £10 to £100 were given by peers and gentry, the clergy and inhabitants of the borough for fund to relieve distress in Leicester (*LJ*, 24 June, 15 July, 1842)

²⁰ A county meeting was called by 57 peers and members of the gentry and £2,169 was raised within a month (*LJ*, 26 September, 17 October, 24 October, 14 November, 1857).

the Loughborough Dispensary (which held an annual ball) and in 1856 a new Juvenile Reformatory Institute.²¹

Together with the peers and the clergy, the gentry played an active role in a range of church-related campaigns and organisations over the period. In 1810 the Auxiliary Bible Society was formed and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, was established in Leicester three years later, the same year as local branches of the Church Missionary Association and the Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews.²² They were followed by the Church Building Society in 1818 (which took on the prefix 'Incorporated' a decade later) and in the following generation by new organisations such as the Church Building Society of the County and Town of Leicester (1838), the lesser Church Extension Fund (1851), and later, the Church Extension Association (1865).²³ At the head of local branches stood members of the peerage as patrons and presidents, usually the Duke of Rutland or Earl Howe, with members of the gentry, such as Herrick, Frewen and C. W. Packe, among the leading contributors, serving with their clerical

²¹ William Herrick, a member of the Institute Committee contributed £50 (LJ 24 February, 17 March, 19 May, 1856).

²² T. Coombes, *The Leicester Directory* (Leicester, 1827), p. xxiv.

²³ Brandwood, *church building*, pp. 59-64; Burns, *Diocesan Revival*, p. 108ff.

allies on organising committees and on shared platforms at public meetings.²⁴

These initiatives increased church-gentry co-operation and forged networks of activist gentlemen and clergy, with political as well as ecclesiastical implications. Prominent among their efforts was the widely supported campaign for the abolition of slavery, but they later came more often to reflect the conservative instincts of the Leicestershire landed classes. Shared campaigns included moves to oppose the emancipation of Roman Catholics in the late 1820s, in support of the Corn Laws from the late 1830s, of Protestantism in Ireland in the following decade, and most forcefully, in opposition to the re-constitution of a Catholic hierarchy in Britain promulgated by the Pope in 1850.²⁵ The Protestant Truth Society, which had been formed in the mid-1830s, with the backing of Herrick and Packe, was followed by the Protestant Alliance, among whose supporters was the enemy of 'aristocratic' politics, C. H. Frewen.²⁶ Major Conservatives meetings and

²⁴ *LJ*, 29 April 1842, 2 May 1851, 24 February 1865; Brandwood, *church building*, pp. 63-4.

²⁵ See Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part I 1829-59* (1966) pp. 271-309; W. Ralls, 'The Papal Aggression of 1850: A Study in Victorian Anti-Catholicism' in G. Parsons (ed), *Religion in Victorian Britain*, 4 (1991), pp. 115-34.

²⁶ Frewen also took an interest in ecclesiastical reform and in 1846 introduced a parliamentary bill to create more dioceses (Burns, *Diocesan Revival*, p. 259).

dinners were regularly attended by a cohort of sympathetic churchmen.²⁷

From the 1830s, church and school building became major areas of activity, as a reformed Church of England sought to increase its presence in the rapidly growing industrial towns and stem the tide of non-conformity. Between 1800 and 1875, 33 parish churches were built or completely rebuilt, 10 of which were in the borough of Leicester. The gentry were the sole or main benefactors in seven of them.²⁸ The evangelical William Perry Herrick was a leading contributor.²⁹ In 1870-72 he paid the whole of the £12,000 building costs for St Mark's church, Leicester, having previously paid contributed £500 towards St Luke's in the borough. Many of his other donations centred on arras where he owned property. In 1859, he paid £993 for the restoration of St Mary-in-the-Elms church at Woodhouse Eaves and nine years later helped pay for a new tower at Holy Trinity church, Barrow. He also £5,000 for a new dispensary in Loughborough in 1862, and met the cost of new almshouses and a school house in Woodhouse. Among other instances of gentry support for church and school building, Thomas Frewen, also an evangelical, paid £9,000 for the purchase of the site and the

²⁷ Eight clergymen were listed as attendees at the Ashby-se-la-Zouch dinner of 1837 (The Times 10 November 1837)

²⁸ Compiled from the gazetteer to Brandwood, *church building*, pp. 71-132.

²⁹ Brandwood, p. 63-4.

construction of Holy Trinity church, Leicester in 1838 and gave an endowment of £1,000 to Holy Trinity and St Mary de Castro churches.³⁰ He also funded the building of Holy Trinity, Hinckley, a growing town in the south west of the county a few miles west of his Sapcote estate. Sir George Beaumont paid for the site of a new church in Swannington in 1825, close to his seat.³¹ The Yorkshireman, Charles Brook of Enderby Hall, met the costs of rebuilding the parish church and school house. In Shenton the Wollaston family contributed nearly £3,000 towards rebuilding the church in 1861. The Phillipps family paid for a new school in Shepshed, where Charles March Phillipps MP was patron and his son, Charles Lisle, was Vicar from 1856-74.³²

The clergy were therefore the partners of the gentry for much of the period and formed an important element in the latter's local networks. Family connections were developed through the entry of sons into the church and the marriage of daughters to clergymen. In public business, the clergy relieved the gentry of much of the burden of service as justices, especially during the first half of the period. Through the magistracy and in support of causes espoused by the gentry, the clergy provided the landed classes with moral authority for their views and

³⁰ ESRO FRE/327; Declaration by Thomas Frewen to the Bishop of Lincoln 7 May 1838, ESRO FRE/2998.

³¹ He asked the poet Wordsworth to help choose a site (Brandwood p. 124).

³² Brandwood, *church building*; *White's Gazetteer* (1863, 1878).

interests and justification for their power over the rural population. The later decline of the clergy's contribution as magistrates, the relative drop of their wealth compared with some other professions after a period of comparative comfort, the ending of some of the institutional privileges of clerical life, and some falling away of the church's hold in national life, paralleled the ebbing away of the gentry's own pre-eminence. By the beginning of the final quarter of the nineteenth century, the alliance between the rural clergy and the gentry from which some of them had historically been drawn, was weakening, and their leading positions in national life were becoming threatened.

The Professions and Business

Beyond the church, the gentry's involvement with the world of work and the professions ranged widely but unevenly. In some areas, the numbers increased during the nineteenth century, while in others they were at best static, and in some newer, more technical and commercially-based areas, the gentry were conspicuous by their absence. Overall, however, their engagement with the professions rose during the period. This was indicative of a desire to extend horizons more widely and to contribute, out of necessity or a sense of duty, to

society growing suspicious of landed privilege. It was a product of some insecurity as much as of confidence.

No other institution matched the ability of the church to reach into so many aspects of the gentry's lives or held such appeal as a vocation or career, or as a source of income for a younger son and of suitable marriage partners for a daughter. Only the military and to a lesser extent the law attracted significant numbers of entrants from Leicestershire gentry families. In other spheres, their presence was negligible. The factors which might have led an individual to embark on a career and the choice of which path he might follow, are highly variable and subjective. They might include economic and family circumstances and a host of personal factors, the relative importance of which is difficult to judge, and must take into account questions of temperament, intellectual and physical attributes and private inclinations. Clearly, the prospect of a comfortable living in a country parish would appeal to a different type of young man to one attracted by the hazardous, not well paid and expensive to maintain, existence as a junior army officer. Younger sons, members of rising, or declining families, and those from less well off ones were more likely to seek an alternative occupation than someone who was destined to become the head of major landowning family, but the latter too, for example, joined

the regular army or navy for a period or qualified as a barrister. Clearly some areas of professional endeavour were more sought after by sons of gentry families than others. There were also distinct patterns of behaviour within families, which led successive generations into a chosen field.

These varied considerations are most apparent in relation to the regular army and navy. Examination of service lists and of the standard biographical reference works has revealed the names of 42 members of Leicestershire gentry families who were military officers over the period. Coming from an inland county with no maritime tradition, just 10 of those served in the Royal Navy. Following from mid-eighteenth century wars overseas and the American War of Independence, the French Wars saw a marked increase in the level of military service among local landed families, both gentry and peerage. At least four fought at Waterloo, and another in the Peninsular War, while two Dixie baronets were naval officers, one who was at Trafalgar and the other for six years a prisoner of the French. The subsequent expansion of Empire provided new opportunities for those seeking far-flung adventures and in the second half of the century, officers from the Leicestershire gentry saw action in the Crimea, India and Africa. Family traditions were also evident: over the period, six members of different branches of the

Hazlerigg family served in the army, and four each from Packe and Burnaby (two of whom reached the rank of Colonel in the Grenadier Guards). Everard March Phillipps, the son of the Catholic Ambrose, became one of the earliest recipients of the Victoria Cross, when he met his death in the Indian Mutiny. His younger brother, Rudolph, died in the Sudan in 1885 in the same battle as Frederick Burnaby, who was also a writer and traveller and a celebrated figure in Victorian society.³³

The army appealed to the gentry in a number of ways. The ethos of the army, in which an officer was expected to behave as a 'gentleman' - honourable, gallant and courageous – appealed to their own idealised image of their class.³⁴ A spell in the cavalry, the Guards or one of the more prestigious infantry regiments retained its 'smart' connotations.³⁵ While it is difficult to measure its importance in individual cases, the lure of the military life was also enhanced by the ethos of masculine Christian duty fostered by the public schools: 10 of the 31 army officers are known to have attended Eton or Harrow. The services offered to the right kind of young man, a mixture of travel, excitement, some social prestige, the exercise of authority and public service. Against such

³³ Burnaby was the author of *On Horseback through Asia Minor* and *A Ride to Khava* (1876, reprinted 1977); *ODNB*, 8, pp. 886-9.

³⁴ Some 38% of officers in 1854 were from peers or gentry families or the sons of baronets (Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815-1914* (1980), p. 8).

³⁵ Samples of the Army Lists for the Leicestershire Regiment (17th Foot) for 1815, 1855 and 1877 contained no members of the 28 selected families.

attractions, the life of an army officer was expensive and pay was low.³⁶ The potential advantage to a family of establishing connections with the aristocracy or gentry families from other counties, through the service of one of its members in a fashionable regiment, was offset by the possibility of long periods of service overseas. Promotion prospects were limited. Among those from the Leicestershire gentry, many served for only a few years, as subalterns or captains, and, in contrast to several officers from the nobility, none rose above the rank of Colonel.³⁷ More fundamentally, the identification of the gentry with the officer class reinforced its perceived role as an agent of state power. The army had been viewed with suspicion by people at all levels of society since the seventeenth century.³⁸ There was some improvement following its reduced role in dealing with internal unrest, following the formation of county police forces from 1839 onwards, and the advent in mid-century of a period of relative social tranquillity. But its reputation suffered again following the mismanagement of the Crimean War, leading to its reform and the abolition of the purchase of commissions in 1871. Such sentiments did not however deter the gentry from a continued

³⁶ Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp. 601-4; a major was paid between 16s a day (in the infantry) and £1 4s 5d (in the Horse Guards) in 1870, and a Lieutenant from 6s 6d up to 10s 4d (*Army List*, 1870). The purchase of a Lieutenancy in a line infantry regiment was set at £700 in 1821, rising to £2,050 for the Foot Guards (Spiers, *The Army*, p. 17).

³⁷ The 2nd Earl of Moira, later the 1st Marquess of Hastings, the 3rd Earl Howe, and the Leicestershire MPs, Lord Robert Manners and Charles Manners, were all Generals.

³⁸ See Brewer, *Sinews of Power*; Spiers, *The Army*, pp. 72-92.

association with the army and for its adaptation and imitation in county society.

Many more Leicestershire gentlemen were exposed to the military through the county-based reserve forces in a way that was more directly useful to their standing and authority locally. Members of the gentry took a leading role in the Yeomanry Cavalry, the Militia and later the Rifle Volunteers. The formation of the Yeomanry in 1794 especially galvanised them. Following a county meeting held at the Three Crowns Inn in Leicester on 10 April 1794 and chaired by the Earl Ferrers, more than £7,000 was raised within a month for the militia and the new cavalry force, with peers and gentry leading the way with individual donations of up to £300.³⁹ When it was reformed in 1803 after its disbandment during the year-long truce, another £10,000 was raised. The first Colonel Commandant of the Yeomanry was Sir William Skeffington, a former Major in the Grenadier Guards with twenty years service. He was succeeded in 1803 by George Legh Keck of Stoughton, a county MP for the previous six years, who held the post until his death in 1860 at the age of 86. Among the junior officers from at least eight landowning families were the artist and huntsman Charles Lorraine Smith and Charles March Phillipps, himself a county member after

³⁹ *LJ*, 11, 18, 25 April, 2 May 1794.

1818.⁴⁰ For the greater part of the period, the Yeomanry formed a central part of the networks which underpinned the gentry's authority in the county and overlapped with its membership of other bodies. The Yeomanry continued to draw most of its officers from the landed classes until the very end of the period, with an increasingly aristocratic leadership from the early Victorian years. Numerous county MPs were Yeomanry officers, with many more among the most active gentry magistrates. By 1843, Earl Howe was a Lieutenant Colonel and his son, the future MP, Viscount Curzon, a subaltern. Three baronets – Hazlerigg, Palmer of Carlton and Dixie – were officers alongside county MPs Edward Farnham and C. W. Packe, the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions, and the future member, Edward Hartopp.⁴¹ After Keck's death, Earl Howe assumed the Colonelcy, with the Duke of Rutland as Honorary Colonel of the Leicestershire Militia, the officer cadre of which was otherwise more widely drawn.⁴² Packe's successor as Chairman of the Quarter Sessions, Sir Frederick Fowke, was the Lieutenant Colonel of the Militia, and also a barrister, while another prominent magistrate, Sir Henry Halford, the son of the former county MP, was a Colonel of the

⁴⁰ *LJ*, 4 Nov 1803.

⁴¹ Cook (1843), p. 35. Thomas Frewen Turner MP and Robert Otway Cave, the borough member in 1827 had earlier been Yeomanry officers.

⁴² *Army List*, (1860), p. 623; White (1863), p. 112. The Lord Lieutenant ceased to be Commandant of the Militia in the reforms of 1871.

Rifle Volunteers, which had been formed in 1859.⁴³ In the final decade of the period however, the proportion of officers from the major gentry and peerage families fell, as the basis of officer recruitment was widened. By 1870, only one of 20 Militia officers came from the 28 sample families, and two others were from other, lesser gentry families. The Rifle Volunteers included only one other head of a gentry family, Captain Sir Archdale Palmer of Wanlip, a former subaltern in the Rifle Brigade. The Yeomanry remained the most aristocratic, with five of its 35 serving officers from the nobility and 14 from all levels of the gentry.⁴⁴

Thus, power and authority in military, political and judicial spheres were closely integrated through the role and influence of a handful of individuals who held multiple offices and positions within the county. These linkages were celebrated rather than concealed, as part of the social life of the county elite. The annual week of Yeomanry training was an occasion for public spectacle and entertainment. Officers provided prize money for Leicester Races, which took place at around the same time, and drill exercises attracted an audience of wives, family

⁴³ Fowke's father, the Freemason, Sir Frederick Gustavus, served in the Yeomanry (*A List of Officers of Militias, the Yeomanry Cavalry, and Volunteer Infantry*, War Office, (1825), p. 175. Harrod & Co's. *Postal and Commercial Directory of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland and Staffordshire* (1870) p. 357.

⁴⁴ Harrod, *ibid.*. The regiment's full establishment in 1865 was 38 officers and 60 men (*LJ*, 5 May 1865).

members and the public. The former attended a Ball and theatrical performances that “drew forth an influx of beauty and fashion.”⁴⁵ As they did in other respects, noted in chapter 5, the gentry and aristocracy were able to express their authority in social rituals which suffused in a benign light the reality of the power that lay behind them.

If the nineteenth century country gentleman stood at the centre of an institutional web of power and authority, he was also, as a landowner, at the heart of professional and business nexus. His relationship with a range of other professions and bodies was however different in nature and in scale to that he enjoyed through the church and the military. As a major landowner, and if he wished manage his estates in a business-like and progressive manner, he would employ a land agent and an attorney, and hope to have at his side a sympathetic banker. Either directly or through these principal advisers, he would also expect to call as necessary on the services of surveyors, auctioneers, architects, builders, landscape designers and sundry tradesmen in the rural economy, and deal with neighbouring landowners and the larger farmers on his estates.⁴⁶ Progressive landlords also joined bodies such as the Leicestershire Agricultural Society, which was formed in 1788 to provide a forum through which peers, gentry and the more ambitious farmers

⁴⁵ *LJ*, 26 September 1823.

⁴⁶ Mingay, *Land and Society*, p. 169ff.; J. A. Charteris, ‘County Trades, Crafts and Professions’, in Mingay (ed.), *Agrarian History*, VI, p. 445-66

defended the 'agricultural interest' and promoted more modern methods of production.⁴⁷ In the daily business of running his affairs, these local economic networks were important to the success of the country squire in maintaining and indeed maximising the sources of wealth on which his mode of life was built. He could not himself, and would not wish to be, a practising expert in these areas: the larger the landowner the more he could afford to employ others to attend to the detail and conduct business on his behalf. The most important were the agent, who collected rents, watched over the tenants and dealt with questions of routine maintenance and improvement on the fabric of the estate, and the attorney, who attended to all the required legal measures and drew up the documentation that was essential to the proper running of family and estate business.

The primacy of the law in securing and confirming the rights and privileges of the gentry ensured that a legal training continued to provide a useful grounding for a country gentleman. A knowledge of the law helped him comprehend and integrate numerous strands of his life and responsibilities, including areas such as family settlements, wills and

⁴⁷ The Earl of Moira was its first President. Founding supporters included Thomas Paget, then a farmer of Ibstock, and the sheep breeder, Robert Bakewell, as well as Edmund Cradock Hartopp, Sir John Palmer, William Pochin (its Vice President), Clement Winstanley and Charles Lorraine Smith. (5 April 1788). Branches at Ashby de la Zouch, Waltham and Market Harborough were later formed. George Moore of Appleby was awarded a gold medal by the Royal Society of Arts in 1794 for land drainage (see Thirsk, *VCH*, pp. 229-37 for agricultural improvement).

questions of inheritance, or help him negotiate his way through property transactions and disputes. It could also add to his effectiveness as a magistrate or as a member of parliament.⁴⁸ Yet, in the nineteenth century, fewer members of the Leicestershire gentry entered the law than became clergymen or military officers. There are various reasons why this was so. As noted earlier, the evolution of the Inns of Court from finishing schools for the upper classes to training grounds for the legal profession slightly reduced their appeal for the gentry compared with the universities. On top of this concentrated and expensive preparation, the practice of the law was, in its early stages, uncertain and ill-rewarded.⁴⁹ The growth of the profession, and increases in the number of both barristers and attorneys, also had other, less obvious effects. Instead of drawing in proportionally more members of the gentry, they became discouraged from dabbling, in their earlier rather dilettante fashion, in a world that was increasingly complex, governed by a body of statute law that was becoming ever more voluminous. It was easier and more prudent for members of the gentry to make sure they obtained the best legal advice they could afford, rather than attempt themselves to master, or claim to have mastered, all its intricacies.

⁴⁸ Bush argued that the purpose of legal training for the landed classes was to produce justices rather than professional lawyers (*English Aristocracy*, p. 69).

⁴⁹ A future Attorney General and Lord Chancellor, Roundell Palmer (see below), earned 26 guineas in his first 18 months as a barrister (J. R. Lewis, *The Victorian Bar* (1982) p. 38).

Despite these possible pitfalls for the would-be gentleman lawyer, a small but significant number did persist to complete their training at one of the Inns and were called to the bar. This gave them a thorough legal knowledge and some added standing. They came from all sections of the gentry, from old families as well as newer entrants, and from major landowners as well as those on the fringe, and included heads of family as well as younger sons. The heads at the end of the period included William Herrick of Beaumanor, who had followed his father as a barrister, after being the first of his family to go to university since the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions, Sir Frederick Fowke, Sir Geoffrey Palmer of Carlton (1809-92), Charles Marriott (b. 1848) and Nathaniel Curzon of Breedon and Lockington. Whether they practised or not, all were described as barristers in Burke's *Peerage and Baronetage* or *Landed Gentry*, and most appeared in the annual *Law List*. These listings in standard contemporary reference works served as an indicator that a profession was no longer considered incompatible with the status of a country gentleman, but was a declaration of a seriousness of purpose which opened the door to admission into professional networks and circles.

The law also remained a channel of upward mobility, both for younger sons who did not inherit the family's main estate and for successful practitioners who amassed sufficient wealth to invest in land. Among the former, Samuel March Phillipps (1780-1862), the younger brother of Charles March Phillipps MP of Garendon, (and the uncle of Ambrose de Lisle) became a writer on law and in 1827 the Permanent Under Secretary for home affairs.⁵⁰ One of the leading lawyers of his day, Roundell Palmer (1812-95), in turn the Solicitor General and Attorney General in the 1860s who was made a peer in 1872 and became the Lord Chancellor, was descended from a junior branch of the Palmers of Wanlip: his grandfather, William Palmer, the younger son of Archdale Palmer (1659-1702), MP for Leicester in 1695, had left the county to become an East India merchant in London.⁵¹ John Paget, after the bitter dispute with his brother over inheritance matters, moved to London where he became a Stipendiary Magistrate in London.⁵² The career of Sir John Mellor MP (1809-87) showed how over two generations new money moved into the fringe gentry through the law. The son of a Lancashire hat manufacturer who moved to Leicester and became its Mayor in 1844, he became the Recorder of Leicester in 1855

⁵⁰ *ODNB*, 44, pp. 90-1. His son followed in him into the law, after attending Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge.

⁵¹ *ODNB*, 42, pp. 522-6; *BPB*; Stenton, *Who's Who*, p. 300. He defended C. W. Packe's widow in the legal action brought against her by George Hussey Packe over the alleged neglect of Prestwold Hall (see chapter 4).

⁵² See chapter 4 above.

and later a High Court judge and the Liberal MP for Yarmouth from 1857-59. In 1873 he owned 573 acres in the county, worth £1,394 a year.⁵³ Attorneys or solicitors were still considered as an inferior species to the barristers and only one member of the sample families, at the very end of the period, joined that branch of the law.⁵⁴ Successful solicitors were however found on the edge of landed society. In the first half of the period, Caleb Lowdham, who was solicitor to Sir Henry Halford and Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp, as well as to the unreformed Leicester Corporation, owned 500 acres in Leicestershire and 200 in Warwickshire.⁵⁵

In contrast to the gentry's continuing association with professions that it had pursued for many generations, it approached business and industry more warily. Capitalist risk-taking was much less to the taste of the Leicestershire squire than the comforting familiarities of the church, the sense of public service and adventure found in the army, or the direct usefulness of a legal qualification. The rise of county banks from the late eighteenth century onwards, for example, presented new openings

⁵³ ODNB, 37, p. 756; ROL, Stenton, *Who's Who*, pp. 266-7, Hartopp, *Roll of Mayors*, pp. 198-9.

⁵⁴ He was William Burnaby (b. 1853), and the fourth son of J. D. Burnaby, a barrister and County Court judge in Leicester. An elder brother, Sherard Burnaby (b. 1846) practised as a barrister on the Midland Circuit (Venn, 1, pp. 456-7).

⁵⁵ ROLLR, DG 24/1030; 10 D 72/542, for correspondence between Lowdham and Halford and Hartopp; *LJ*, 8 May 1840, 1840; Frizelle & Martin, *Royal Infirmary*, p. 77; *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, vol. 5; Greaves, *Corporation of Leicester*, p. 16. His property was inherited by a distant relative, Lewis Allsop, MP for Camelford in 1819 and solicitor to the Duchy of Cornwall (Thorne, 3, p. 63).

for the gentry as both investors and customers but they were wary. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were eight banks in the county, and another five came into being before the reform of banking law in 1826.⁵⁶ Mergers between small partnerships were common and failure was endemic, culminating in the crash of Clarke, Philips and Mitchell's bank in 1843, after which only four local banks remained in business.

Against this background, the caution of old landed families with much to lose was understandable. Before 1843, across seventy years of banking history in Leicestershire, members of just two established gentry families had become partners in a bank: in 1808 James Winstanley, the second of son of Clement Winstanley of Braunstone, joined John Mansfield in an association that lasted only one year. In 1815, Thomas Babington MP of Rothley, and a Director of the Sierra Leone Company, together with his third son, Matthew, and his existing partner, T. E. Dacey of Claybrooke, formed a new partnership with Mansfield. For the latter, whose father had founded one of the earliest Leicestershire banks in 1776, it forged a connection that was directly helpful to his personal political ambitions, and he followed Babington as a borough MP in 1818. The bank outlived the deaths of both Babingtons, until 1839, when,

⁵⁶ *VCH*, 3, p. 50.

after Mansfield died, it merged with the ill-fated enterprise then run by Clarke and Phillips.

Banking was more appealing to those rising men who were prepared to take risks in pursuit of greater fortune. Some already owned land and others saw it as the means to amass the wealth that could launch them into landed society. The most successful, as noted in earlier chapters, were Thomas Pares and Thomas Paget, who founded a bank in Leicester in 1800, alongside existing legal, hosiery and farming interests.⁵⁷ The families parted company in 1824, following the death of Pares, to continue as two separate banking concerns. They had however laid the foundations of enduring wealth that propelled them into the upper tiers of the gentry in the second half of the century. The interaction of finance, industry and land, combined with radical political commitments, gave Thomas's son, Thomas Tertius, a rare range of connections and spheres of influence: these culminated in his election on two occasions as a Liberal member for the county, and also included the positions of High Sheriff, magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of Leicestershire, and as a further arena for developing his social and political networks, membership of three London clubs.⁵⁸ For each success there were several failures. Thomas Babington's foray into banking did nothing to

⁵⁷ They accounted for six of the 10 names of those with banking interests in table VII above.

⁵⁸ Bateman, p. 350.

arrest the decline of his ancient family's fortunes. The twenty-year-old bank of Bentley and Buxton was declared bankrupt in 1803, two years after the death of its founder William Bentley, who had bought Danet's Hall on the outskirts of Leicester. The collapse in 1843 of Clarke, Phillips and Mitchell ended the brief landed life of the latter and released onto the property market a swathe of houses and estates across the county. And despite his efforts in this and other business areas, Dicey remained on the fringes of the gentry and it was left to his intellectually gifted sons to seek fame and success in other professional fields.⁵⁹

If the wider gentry were not prepared to commit themselves as partners or directors in such an unstable business, they appear to have been extensive users of the banks' services. Members of the gentry in search of financial facilities would have gravitated quite naturally to banks run by people they knew or who moved in the same social circles and could be vouched for as respectable figures. To that extent local banks were part of the gentry's active business and professional networks and part of the local machinery of business. Financial records of some leading families show that, for example, Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp MP, whose father, Edmund Bunny had briefly entered banking in the 1770s, had accounts at the turn of the century with Bentley & Buxton's and

⁵⁹ See chapter 5.

Pares & Paget.⁶⁰ Thomas Frewen MP and C. W. Packe MP each had accounts with the doomed Clarke, Phillips & Mitchell; the former also banked with Pares, and Glyn & Co in London, and the latter with Mansfield and Babington in the 1820s.⁶¹

In other areas of commercial activity, the gentry were even more hesitant. There appears to be no instance in which a member of the gentry became a partner or owner of any of the hosiery or manufacturing businesses that were springing up in the borough. Many of these enterprises remained on a small scale – with few employing more than a score of workers - into the middle of the century and they were not hugely profitable.⁶² The main reason for the lack of engagement was however cultural rather than commercial. Leicester's industry was dominated by the same non-conformist radicals who had taken control of the borough corporation in 1836. The political chasm that had been confirmed at that point was paralleled by a gulf in attitudes to business, with the residual paternalism of the landed classes at odds with the individualism of the urban capitalist. Some large scale undertakings did however attract financial backing from the gentry. Some were favourably inclined to the potential profits in railway

⁶⁰ ROLLR 10 D 72/652; 72/704, *Bank Accounts*.

⁶¹ For Frewen, ESRO FRE/581, FRE/7513, FRE/8776; for Packe ROLLR DG 258/6/8, *Bank Accounts*.

⁶² C. Ashworth, 'Hosiery Manufacture', *VCH*, 4, pp. 303-13.

development, and invested in it from the 1830s. The resistance of some major landowners, such as the Earl of Harborough, who objected to proposed lines which cut through their land, gentlemen such as Charles March Phillipps, Sir Edmund Cradock Hartopp and Thomas Frewen, is well-recorded.⁶³ Others however, such as the otherwise staunch conservative C. W. Packe, the banker Matthew Babington, the radical Waterloo veteran Colonel Cheney of Gaddesby, were members of the provisional committee for the Midland Counties railway in 1833-34, of which Dicey of Claybrooke became Chairman.⁶⁴ Packe's brother, George Hussey, was Deputy Chairman of the Great Northern Railway. As noted in Chapter 4, both Packes held railway shares in 1846. Several members of different branches of the Paget family were also shareholders, one of whom, George Ernest Paget was later Chairman of the Midland Railway. The gentry involvement in railway companies was however succeeded by those of more radical background connected with the borough. The Quaker, John Ellis (1789-62), Liberal MP for Leicester from 1848-52, held the chairmanship of the Midland Railway from 1849-58, and his son, Edward Shipley Ellis (1817-79), Mayor of Leicester in 1860-61, succeeded him as chairman and retained the post until his death in 1879.⁶⁵

⁶³ Patterson, p. 260-9; VCH, 3, pp. 108-15; T. Warner, 'Leicestershire Landowners and the Railways, Resistance and Co-operation', *TLAHS*, 61 (1987), pp. 51-61.

⁶⁴ *LJ*, 27 December 1833, 31 January 1834.

⁶⁵ Stenton, pp. 126-7; Hartopp, *Roll of Mayors*, pp. 206-7.

In other professions and occupations, the numbers of gentry were too low to detect any patterns or to argue that they had any significance in providing points of connection or influence. This applies to medicine, to more recent and more technical ones such as engineering or accountancy, and confirm the picture so often depicted of the landed classes as a body which lacked scientific training or acumen.⁶⁶ In understanding the relative decline of the gentry in some areas of public life, these gaps in its achievements are the 'dogs which did not bark in the night' and are revealing by their very absence.

The pursuit of some of these other occupations highlights the fate of younger sons and their descendents. Under a system of inheritance based largely on the principle of primogeniture, they often slipped from landed society into a mode of living that was more middle class. In a number of cases the choice of occupation may also be regarded as a measure of social decline. The Babington family, who at the opening of the period were one of the oldest and most prominent of the gentry, ended it with just 500 acres in their possession and their home at Rothley sold. Among the younger brothers of the Rev. Thomas Babington (1820-96), the Rector of Wanlip, John Albert Babington (born

⁶⁶ Alfred Henry Paget (b 1848), a member of a junior branch of the Paget family and outside the sample, became an architect. His father was a solicitor and grandfather a surgeon. He was a second cousin of Thomas Tertius Paget MP (Fletcher, p. 17).

approximately 1844), became the Head of Lincoln Grammar School in 1875, and Augustus Babington (born approximately 1851) was a Post Office Inspector in Cheltenham.⁶⁷ Their cousin, Francis Evans Babington (1830-1920), the eldest son of Matthew the banker, worked in the War Office before becoming a bank manager in Norwich. Others chose not to work but to live off their remaining capital and any income they could derive from small amounts of land or investments, in circumstances of suburban gentility. Thomas Gisborne Babington, who sold Rothley to his brother-in-law, Sir James Parker, went to live in a more modest but no doubt suitably refined house in the Cathedral Close at Lichfield.⁶⁸ Richard Wolstan Dixie was the second of four sons of the Trafalgar veteran, Sir Alexander Dixie (1780-1857), whose elder brother, also Alexander, succeeded to the baronetcy. By 1881 he was living at Osborne Terrace in the village of Clewer in Berkshire, "off dividends and interest", according to the census return of that year.⁶⁹ In the same year, John Frewen, the son of the first marriage of Thomas Frewen MP, and educated at Rugby and Cambridge, lived at 6, Milverton Terrace, Leamington Spa, on "income from land and money."⁷⁰ A third possibility was to take a chance in the Empire. One of Thomas Gisborne Babington's brothers and two second cousins joined the East India

⁶⁷ Information on members of the Babington and other families mentioned in this paragraph is from Venn, BLG (various), and Fletcher.

⁶⁸ TNA, HO RG 9/1873, *Census Return 1861*.

⁶⁹ TNA, HO RG11/1324/25, *Census Return 1881*.

⁷⁰ TNA HO RG11/3094/129, *Census Return 1881*.

Company. Charles Norman Pochin (1827-1870), the younger brother of William Pochin, joined the civil service in Madras, while William Wollaston, who died in 1831 at the age of 21, served in the Bengal Native Infantry. Others went to Natal or Australia (Thomas Fosbrooke (1812-73), a younger brother of the fringe gentry barrister, Leonard Fosbrooke, and Charles Hazlerigg (1845-91), the fifth son of Sir Arthur Hazlerigg, respectively). Separation from a landed inheritance did not necessarily spell disaster, as the success of the junior branch of the Palmers as merchants and in the law, mentioned above, showed. The Rev. Professor Churchill Babington (1821-89), for example, was the Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge from 1865-80.

In these different ways, the gentry were no strangers to the world of the professions. In some cases, for heads of family for example,, a qualification or a short period spent in a profession provided opportunities to broaden horizons, extend his circle of connections and provide experience or a training that would assist him as a landowner and magistrate. For younger sons, the professions offered the prospect of independent status, a means of earning a living, and the possibility of success and re-establishment in landed society in their own right. And for the rising men, business or a profession was no less than the means which enabled him to enter that society. The knowledge, influences and

connections which the professions gave the landed gentry and their families involved in the nineteenth century something more than a diversionary flirtation. They built upon the foundations created through education and marriage. They were in many cases closely linked to the exercise of the public offices associated with the gentry: the correspondence between the incidence of those who were both officers in the yeomanry and magistrates, or between the law and the magistracy, showed how different spheres of activity were interconnected. These connections were integral to the formation and development of the networks through which the gentry maintained their status, exercised their remaining authority, conducted their business and shared their experience with similar families throughout the country.

9. Conclusion

The 85 years covered by this study represent a period of far-reaching social and political change. Among their many effects, the developments of these years helped re-shape the character and identity of the gentry, a group which had since the medieval age been a central component of England's landed elite. Such an extended time-span makes it possible to draw conclusions on the impact of these changes on the gentry, how it adapted and responded to them, particularly in its public and political roles, and how it evolved as a social group over three or four generations.

Like all periods of transition, it was uneven in its development, and was full of contradictions and paradoxes. Change in the composition of the gentry was itself nothing new: today's old wealth was always yesterday's new money. Change in society was evolutionary rather than revolutionary: moments such as 1832, 1846 and 1867 saw quantum leaps in political life, sudden shifts from one state of affairs to another, but not in cataclysmic ways that might have imperilled the existence of a landed ruling class. The gentry, as part of that traditional, hierarchical elite, was challenged by the rise of urban, middle-class and democratic forces and by a rationalist individualism that was antipathetic to the

mystical claims of inherited privilege. In a county such as Leicestershire, where the gentry had for parts of its history been relatively unconstrained by an over-bearing nobility, it sometimes resisted these forces, sometimes it accommodated them and sometimes retreated before them. In some respects, the county's gentry flourished, while in others it betrayed signs of incipient decline. It grew in numbers but lost something of its cohesiveness, and while it prospered in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was falling behind a wealthy aristocracy and an emergent plutocracy of super-rich financiers and businessmen. Its political power was waning but it played a full part in some professions and in public service, locally and nationally, and extended its social and family connections to develop nationwide networks of influence beyond the boundaries of the county and its sharply defined 'community'.

Amid the fluctuations, there was evidence of continuity too. Many old families, such as those of Herrick, Hazlerigg, Dixie and Hartopp survived, and in some cases prospered through some lean periods or after resolving problems of inheritance. Their difficulties were most evident at the end of the eighteenth century when absenteeism, family and personal crises, combined to produce a failure of leadership among some of the old and wealthiest gentry families. Neither their survival nor their prosperity was assured. Some, such as Skeffington and

Boothby, disappeared while others such as Babington and Ashby, declined. The perpetuation of a family name, and the ability to maintain an estate intact and prevent its sale on the open market, was often maintained by the application of intricate inheritance schemes between branches of a family, which sometimes required a change of name by the beneficiary, who might be a son-in-law or a distant cousin of the original owner. This creative, legal flexibility was one of the secrets of the landed classes' capacity for renewal, which enabled them to keep its estates intact and off the market.

Despite the appearance of continuity at the top, the landed society of Leicestershire was not closed or caste-like and was subject to continual re-constitution. Nearly a third of those who owned more than 1,000 acres in the county in 1790 held no land there by the 1870s. Some 25 families who were part of the mainstream of the gentry at the end of the period entered it after 1790, 43% of the total. Few newcomers, however, penetrated landed society at the top in one generation. Most who entered it did so at the lower echelons. By the 1870s, two thirds of those at the lesser level were newcomers, whose rising numbers reflected increased rental income and mid-century prosperity in Leicestershire's active property market. A significant proportion of those who owned under 1,000 acres, and were regarded as yeomen by

Bateman were in reality minor country gentlemen, who owned modest country houses on small estates and were able to participate in county business as magistrates, one of the traditional offices of the gentry class. The existence of this grouping, and its contribution to landed society in the mid-Victorian period, has been somewhat neglected by many historians, who have placed greater emphasis on upper reaches of landed society. The new arrivals were principally professionals such as lawyers and bankers or gentry from other counties who sought a presence in Leicestershire as part of a wide-ranging property portfolio or as a base for the pursuit of hunting. Local businessmen were few: they did not generate the huge profits of industrialists in other parts of the country and preferred a villa in the borough suburbs of Stoneygate, for example. Thus, changes in the composition of the Leicestershire gentry were accomplished without an upheaval in the social structure of landownership. While most of the old gentry retained a stake in the county, a continual stream of new entrants provided new blood and willing candidates for public duties. The turnover in the lower tiers, and the increase in numbers, did however alter the balance of landed society. There were large gaps in wealth between some of the peers and the gentry, and between the multi-county magnates of the gentry and 'squires' with 700 acres or so. The gentry, never monolithic, became less cohesive.

This declining homogeneity reflected the erosion of many of the assumptions on which the pre-eminence of the gentry as a social group rested. The constitutional framework, which equated the ownership of land with the inalienable right to rule was manifestly giving way to an urban, more democratic culture. The new lesser gentry did not always share the old attitudes of paternalism and responsibility which previously governed relations between the landowner and the local community. The gentry's continued commitment to the established church was also as much as source of weakness as strength. It provided the gentry with its moral code and sense of duty and remained a pillar of the constitutional structure; but church reform and divisions within the church, combined with assaults from non-conformity and secularism, made it less useful to the gentry as a vehicle through which the working classes, and a declining rural population in particular, could be persuaded to accept the prevailing social order.

The sense of decline became evident in the second half of the period in changes to the gentry's public and political roles. At the end of the eighteenth century, the gentry had renewed its involvement in public duties as war and unrest demanded a new seriousness of purpose, only to fade away once again towards the end of the period. The gentry's

commitment to public duties was inconsistent and inhibited concerted action; it was obliged to adjust to and work with others, in the nobility, who played a more assertive role in county business and as MPs throughout the nineteenth century, or among the rising middle class men who sought to enter landed society. One result of the changes in outlook and circumstances became evident in the 1860s, when a new generation of parliamentary candidates was chosen to replace members of the old gentry and the anti-reformist Tory diehards who had previously represented the county.

Relations between the gentry and the middle classes in the borough of Leicester were at best ambivalent and became increasingly fraught. For the first half the period, the county gentry and the urban middle class (and what passed in Leicester for the 'urban gentry') shared some cultural interests and worked together on charitable causes. These continued to a limited extent in the Victorian period, but, politically and economically, the two were growing apart. After Leicester's non-conformist, radical, business leaders took control of the borough council in 1835, a chasm opened up which separated the town and county into two distinct political worlds. The two sparred but rarely clashed in any major way because each carved out a sphere of influence into which the other rarely ventured. A very few, and only the Paget family with any

marked success, were able to cross the town-country divide, but as Liberals they drew little support from the predominantly Tory squirearchy. The differences between the two philosophies represented by the landowning gentry and the urban businessmen never therefore fully developed into direct conflict. There was something of a stand-off, a 'cold war,' in which the interests of the gentry were not directly assailed in their own heartland by urban-based radicals, and not seriously undermined until the 1880s and further electoral reform and the creation of county councils.

The county and its 'community' of the landed classes retained its significance in shaping the identity of the gentry, while being radically affected by changes within and without. It remained at the centre of the lives of many members of the gentry and their families. Three quarters of those who owned more than 1,000 acres in the county at the end of the period had most, or all of what they owned, in Leicestershire. Those who possessed properties in several counties, such as Herrick, Frewen and Packe, sought to consolidate the Leicestershire holdings and involved themselves in its business, as county magistrates or High Sheriffs. Conversely, where multi-county magnates who had a few hundred acres in Leicestershire became involved in local affairs, they did so in the county where their main interests lay and not in ones where

they had a smaller stake. For the generality of the squirearchy, the county was the setting for their social routines and rituals, in balls and sundry entertainments and gatherings, and as the main (but not exclusive) focus of their charitable donations.

Yet, the nature of the 'county community,' as the primary focus of much of the gentry's social and cultural life and its political activity, was being eroded. The division of the county into two constituencies in 1832 undermined its identity as a single political entity. Greater government scrutiny over the magistracy, and their management of the county's finances and the conduct of their administrative functions, undermined the autonomy of the gentry as the fount of local power and authority. But there were many other factors at work, such as the growth of the railways which placed a midland county like Leicestershire in easy reach of its neighbours, and, after 1858, with a direct link to London. Major gentry from other counties bought land in the county. The incorporation of a substantial minority of the local gentry into the national educational system of the public schools, a greater tendency to marry into families outside the county and a wider professional involvement also contributed to the breaking down of the link between the gentry and a specific county. Some of this was already apparent in the eighteenth century, when national influences were brought to bear on gentry

culture, and were implicit in Langford's notion of the "mobile community." In the nineteenth, however, the pace of change accelerated, new possibilities of travel and the external cultural influences and social connections increased. The culture of the gentry, in all its aspects, was not one of localism or particularism, nor was it unique to the gentry as a class nationally. It drew on influences from a variety of sources, deriving much principally from the aristocracy, though also from sections of the urban middle classes, through education and the professions, and from those of their number who entered landed society.

The world of the nineteenth century gentry was not therefore circumscribed by the boundaries of a geographical county. The continuing influence of the gentry, and its place in society, was built on the cultivation of a range of more extensive social, political and cultural networks. To some degree these had existed previously, in the encounters between the gentry of different counties, in London, Bath or Tunbridge Wells, for example. Such linkages were however an extension and an expression of the county community, wherever it might physically be located, and were founded on the rituals and culture of landed society and those whom it recognised and accepted into its midst. During the course of the nineteenth century these circles of

influence became extended through institutions such as the public schools, or through increased participation in some sectors of the professional world which were not the exclusive preserve of the landed classes. Where he was not, for example, relying on his own legal training, the progressive country gentleman also called increasingly on the expertise and specialism of a range of advisors (who were not his social equals) in support of the effective management of his estates and financial affairs. Such business relationships were as important to his survival as family and social connections. Through a series of overlapping and interlocking networks, the gentry struck marriage alliances to uphold and protect their family interests, connected socially and in business with members of the nobility, churchmen, office holders, political figures, former school or university colleagues, professional men, and those who were active on the boards of charities, learned societies or public bodies and occasionally of railway company or banks. These connections helped sustain the gentry as an influence in society long after the reins of power had begun to slip from its grasp. In so many spheres of activity, the concept of a 'community' defined in terms of its home 'county' was inadequate to describe the diversity and linkages and forums that were available to the gentry. The notion of a 'parish' squire or one whose world stopped at the county's edge cannot adequately describe the life of the active country gentleman in the

nineteenth century. Equally, the use of the term the 'county community' to describe landed society in general, as an imagined community that was present in most shires and regions, conveys a misleading image of its scale and cohesion. The connections which existed within the landed classes, and their linkages with the rest of society, were too complex and too diverse to warrant the usage of a term which sets, or implies, geographic and social limits. The gentry was too broad to be called a homogenous community and its interests too extensive to be captured within the borders of a county.

Some of these developments, the changes in the political context, the infusion - to lesser or greater extent - of new money, or its traditional social rituals, would doubtless have been reflected in the experience of the gentry in other counties. The networks which existed between members of the gentry in different counties, in education, marriage and professional life, also established their own shared patterns and experiences. Other factors may have been special to Leicestershire, resulting first from its central geographical location, which placed it within increasingly easier reach of London and the north, and the importance of hunting in its social life. The county was also characterised by the market in smaller estates and the existence since medieval times of the middling and lesser gentry who owned them;

unlike some of its neighbours it was not dominated by a small number of aristocrats and its industry was light and diverse. Precise comparison with the gentry elsewhere is however difficult in view of the relative absence of published work on its history in other counties during the nineteenth century, while the regional and national networks have been little investigated.

The evolving, and variable, relationship between the gentry and the county was one of several paradoxes which emerged from these decades of change and transition. As the numbers of gentry grew it did not become stronger as a group but became less cohesive and less easy to define. The label of the 'gentry' embraced a wide range of wealth and modes of living. They shared some fundamental common interests as part of a national elite, but there were others who were wealthier, and whose influence was rising. Although the gentry succumbed to certain metropolitan influences and its consciousness was shaped increasingly within a national context, most lesser squires could not compete with the richest in the land and the expense of the London 'season.' These apparently contradictory patterns reflected the breadth of wealth, status and background which the gentry came to encompass. They represented the culmination of changes which had affected the gentry from the early modern period. Evolutionary changes, in

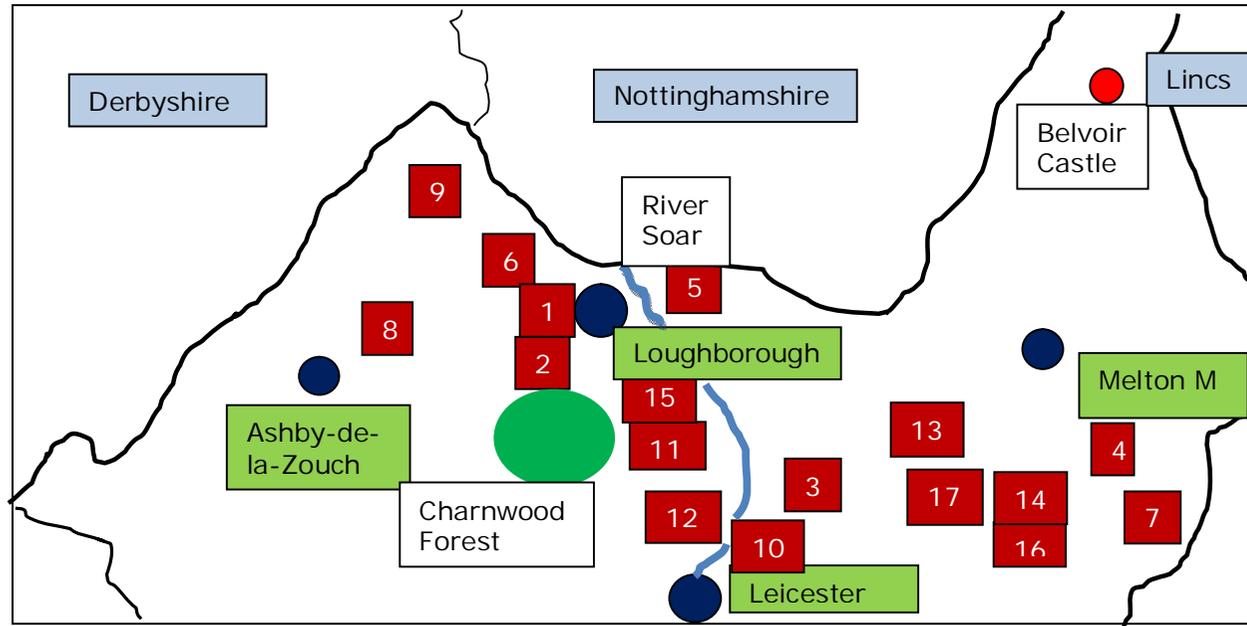
composition and identity, the result of the turnover of rising and falling families, had always produced among the gentry at any one point, a mixture of types and individuals. The gentry's capacity for adaptation and its elasticity had been one of its strengths and one of the mainsprings of its endurance over the centuries. But, this defining quality became more pronounced across the mid-nineteenth century as change accelerated. Overall, there was within the gentry such a variety of experience that made it difficult to generalise and ultimately difficult to define it as a group. By the end of the period it had passed through a period of agglomerative growth which undermined the compactness which had been one of its hallmarks and had enabled it to function as a political force. At that point, the usefulness of the term the 'gentry,' to describe an identifiable component of the country's ruling class, was running its course, and there began a long coda of decline, which echoes even into the twenty-first century.

Appendix I (a): North Leicestershire



Appendix I (b): Some Gentry Seats & Estates in North Leicestershire

Leicester to Loughborough: 11 miles; to Melton 15 miles; Ashby-de-la-Zouch 17 miles



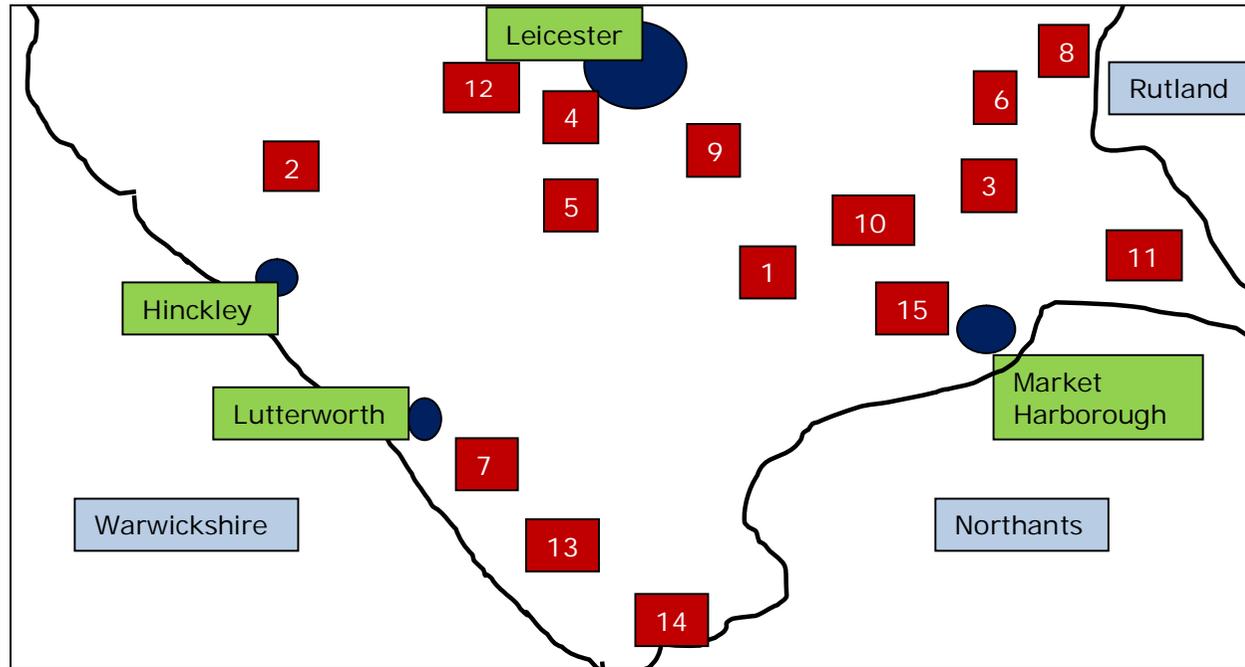
- | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------|
| 1. Garendon: | March Phillipps | 5. Prestwold: | Packe | 9. Lockington: | Story/Curzon | 13. Gaddesby: | Cheney |
| 2. Beaumanor: | Herrick | 6. Long Whatton: | Dawson | 10. Humberstone: | Paget | 14. Lowesby: | Fowke |
| 3. Barkby: | Pochin | 7. Cold Overton: | Frewen | 11. Rothley: | Babington | 15. Quorn: | Farnham |
| 4. Dalby: | Hartopp | 8. Coleorton: | Beaumont | 12. Wanlip: | Palmer | 16. Quenby: | Ashby |
| | | | | | | 17. Baggrave: | Burnaby |

Appendix I (c) South Leicestershire



Appendix I (d): Some Gentry Seats & Estates in South Leicestershire

Leicester to Hinckley 14 miles; to Lutterworth 13 miles; to Market Harborough 14 miles



- | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Wistow: | Halford | 6. Skeffington: | Skeffington/Tailby | 11. Holt: | Neville |
| 2. Market Bosworth: | Dixie | 7. Misterton: | Franks | 12. Westcotes: | Ruding |
| 3. Noseley: | Hazlerigg | 8. Launde: | Simpson/Dawson | 13. Cotesbach: | Marriott |
| 4. Braunstone: | Winstanley/Pochin | 9. Stoughton: | Keck | 14. Stanford: | Cave |
| 5. Enderby: | Smith/Brook | 10. Carlton: | Palmer | 15. Gumley: | Cradock Hartopp |

Appendix II: Potential Members of the Leicestershire Gentry in 1790

^ lived mainly outside Leicestershire

* Greater Gentry

Robert ABNEY	Lindley Hall
^Mrs Charles ALLANSON	Beaumont Leys
Shuckburgh ASHBY FRS MP (1724-1792)	Quenby Hall
Francis Dugdale ASTLEY	Odstone
Thomas BABINGTON MP (1758-1837)	Rothley Temple
Miss Elizabeth BAINBRIGGE (1715-1797)	Lockington Hall
^Sir George BEAUMONT (1753-1827)	Coleorton
John BEAUMONT	Belgrave
^Sir Robert BURDETT (1716- 794)	
Rev Andrew BURNABY DD (1732-1812)	Baggrave Hall
^Philip BURTON (1710-1792)	Burton Lazars
*Sir Thomas CAVE MP (1766-1792)	Stanford Hall
Mrs CHARNELS	Snarestone
Thomas CHESLYN (1734-1814)	Langley Priory
John CLARKE	New Parks
^*Charles Boothby CLOPTON (1741?-1800)	formerly of Tooley & Foston
Thomas COWPER HINCKS	Marefield
^*Sir Edmund CRADOCK HARTOPP MP (1749-1833)	Four Oaks Hall, Warwicks;
Penn Assheton CURZON MP (1757-1797)	Gopsall Park
Sir John DANVERS (1723-1796)	Swithland Hall
Edward DAWSON (1730-1788)	Long Whatton

*Sir Wolstan DIXIE (1737-1806)	Bosworth Hall
^Charles DUNCOMBE	Stockerston
Vincent EYRE	Eastwell
^William FARMER	Normanton le Heath
Sir William FARRELL-SKEFFINGTON (1742-1815)	Skeffington Hall
Leonard FOSBROOKE (1735-1801)	Shardlow Hall
Lt. Col. Sir Thomas FOWKE (1744?-1786) (Trustees)	Lowesby Hall
*Naphthali FRANKS	Misterton Hall
*John FREWEN TURNER MP (1755-1829)	Cold Overton Hall
John GODFREY	Welby
*Sir William GORDON	Garendon
Henry GREENE	King's Norton
^Sir Henry HARPUR CREWE (1763-1819)	
*Edward HARTOPP WIGLEY (1757-1808)	Little Dalby Hall
Thomas Bainbrigge HERRICK (1754-1824)	Beaumanor Park
^*Sir Robert HESILRIGE	Noseley
Sir Charles Grave HUDSON (1730-1813)	Wanlip
John Peach HUNGERFORD MP	
^Sir Justinian ISHAM (1740-1818)	Lampport, Northants
George Anthony Legh KECK MP (1774-1860)	Stoughton Grange
Charles LORAIN SMITH MP (1751-1835)	Enderby Hall
^Edward Loveden LOVEDEN MP (1751-1822)	
William French MAIOR JP (1773-)	Market Harborough
*Rev Dr Robert MARRIOTT (1743-1808)	Cotesbach
Charles MORRIS (1727-1798)	Lodington
*Cosmas NEVILL (-1829)	Nevill Holt Hall
Rev James ORD MA (1759?-1843)	Langton Hall
Charles James PACKE (1726-1816)	Prestwold Hall
*Sir John PALMER MP (1735-1817)	Carlton Park
Renee PAYNE	Dunton Basset

Capt James PHELP (d 1816)	Coston
*William POCHIN MP (1731-1798)	Barkby Hall
Sir George ROBINSON	Stretton Hall
Walter RUDING (1745-1819)	Westcotes
Henry SHUTTLEWORTH	Great Bowden
Mrs James SHUTTLEWORTH	Halstead
John SIMPSON	Launde Abbey
Hollid SMITH (1726-1795)	Normanton Turville
John SUFFIELD BROWN	Leesthorpe Hall
^John TOWNLEY (1731-1813)	
Francis Fortescue TURVILLE (1752-1829)	Husbands Bosworth Hall
^*Henry William WILSON (1728-1796)	Allextun & Keythorpe
Clement WINSTANLEY (1740?-1808)	Braunstone Hall
^William WOLLASTON MP (1730-1797)	Shenton Hall
George WRIGHT	Brooksby Hall

Appendix III: Survival and Change in the Leicestershire Gentry 1790-1875 (owners of more than 1,000 acres in the county in 1790)

(a) 1790-1830	Greater Gentry	Middling Gentry	Lesser Gentry	TOTAL
Survived	13	7	12	32 (65.3%)
Passed to Branch		1	4	5 (10.2%)
Fringe			3	3 (6.1%)
Peerage			2	2 (4.1%)
Departed/Sold	1	1	5	7 (14.3%)
TOTAL	14	9	26	49

(b) 1830-1875	Greater Gentry	Middling Gentry	Lesser Gentry	TOTAL
Survived	10	4	9	23 (52.3%)
Passed to Branch		2	1	3 (6.8%)
Fringe		1	3	4 (9.1%)
Peerage	3			3 (6.8%)
Departed/Sold	1	1	9	11 (25%)
TOTAL	14	8	22	44

(c) 1790-1875	Greater Gentry	Middling Gentry	Lesser Gentry	TOTAL
Survived	10	1	9	20 (40.8%)
Passed to Branch		1	2	3 (6.1%)
Fringe		3	3	6 (12.2%)
Peerage	2		3	5 (10.2%)
Departed/Sold	2	4	9	15 (30.6%)
TOTAL	14	9	26	49

Appendix IV – Categories of Major Leicestershire Landowner in 1873¹

I. PEERS AND MEMBERS OF PEERS' FAMILIES

More than 10,000 acres	2	40,283 acres (7.8% of county)
3,000-10,000 acres	10	61,852 acres (11.9%)
1,000-3,000 acres	10	19,387 acres (3.7%)
under 1,000 acres	15	5,156 acres (1.0%)
TOTAL	37	126,678 (24.4%)

II. THE GENTRY (commoners with more than 1,000 acres)

3,000 – 10,000 acres:	Greater Gentry (or 'Greater Landowners' in Bateman)	
	10	47,197 acres (9.1%)
2,000-3,000 acres	Middling Gentry (or 'Squires')	
	14	33,235 acres (6.4%)
1,000-2,000 acres	Lesser Gentry (or 'Squires')	
	36	50,404 (9.7%)
TOTAL	60	130,836 acres (25.2%)

III. FRINGE GENTRY (with under 1,000 acres, worth at least £1,000 gross annual value)

750-1,000 acres	19	16,564 acres (3.2%)
500-750 acres	30	18,992 (3.6%)
under 500 acres	11	4,128 (0.8%)
TOTAL	60	39,684 (7.7%)

IV. POTENTIAL SUB-GENTRY (under 1,000 acres valued at £500-750 per year)

500-750 acres worth £750 - £1,000	12
500-750 acres worth £500- £750	2

¹ Compiled from *Return of Owners of Land 1873*, Parliamentary Papers, LXXII, C.1097, 1874

under 500 acres worth £750 - £1,000	35
under 500 acres worth £500- £750	90
TOTAL	139
TOTAL II, III & IV	259

Appendix V: The Leicestershire Gentry 1873-83

Columns 1-3 give the names and details of those individuals listed in the *Return of Owners of Land 1873*

Column 1 Name

Column 2 Acres owned in Leicestershire

Column 3 Gross Annual Value (GAV) of Land in Leicestershire in £

Columns 4-10 give information relating to those included in Bateman, *The Great Landowners* (1883 edition)

Column 4 Acres owned in Leicestershire

Column 5 Total number of acres owned

Column 6 Percentage of land in Leicestershire

Column 7 Gross Annual Value of Land in Leicestershire

Column 8 Gross Annual Value of all land owned

Column 9 Percentage of gross annual value from land in Leicestershire

Column 10 The total number of counties in which land was owned, according to Bateman.

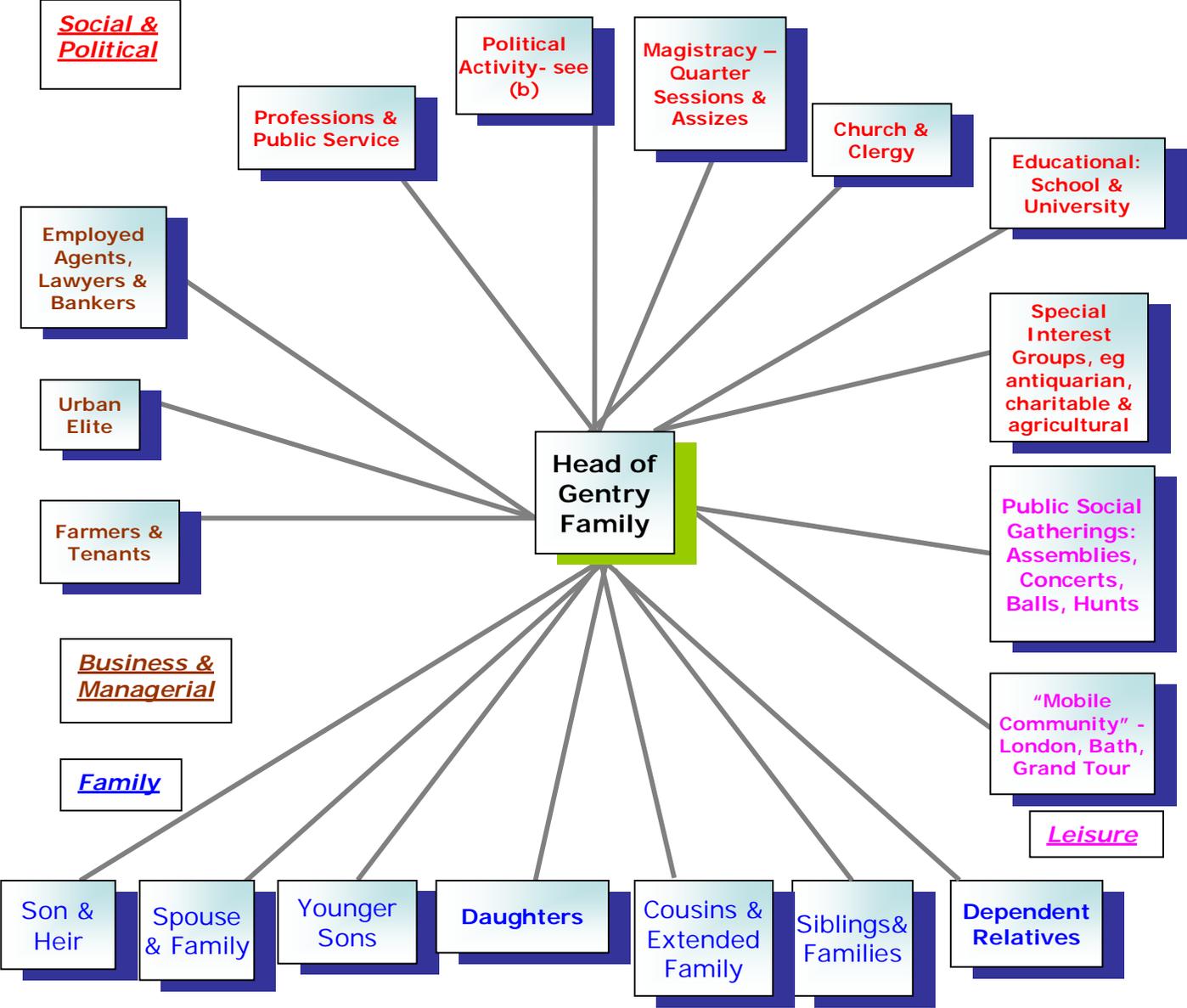
Column 11 the individual's status according to the amount of land owned in Leicestershire: GG= Greater Gentry; MG = Middling Gentry; LG=Lesser Gentry; G = Gentry with main holdings in other counties and less than 1,000 acres in Leicestershire.

ROL											
1.											
Name	2.	3.	Bateman								11.
	Acres	£GAV	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	Status	
	Leics	Leics	Acres	Total	%	GAV	Total	%GAV	No.		
			Leics	Acres	Leics	Leics	Gav	Leics	Counties		
Ashby, R. N.	1874	2891								LG	
Beaumont, Sir George Howland	2477	3685	2977	3556	83.7	3935	4660	84.4	3	MG	
Biggs, H. G.	144	183		2995			3048		2	G	
Blake, Arthur	1216	2100	1266	4343	29.2	2213	7331	30.2	5	LG	
Brook, Charles (Mrs in Bateman)	2326	4432	2325	2347	99.1	4432	5109	86.7	2	MG	
Brooke, Sir William De Capell	61	486	61	6593	0.9	486	8472	5.7	4	G	
Burdett, Col. Francis	2258	2880	2258	20984	10.8	2880	29385	9.8	6	MG	
Chamberlayne, Tankerville	1328	2199	1350	12363	10.9	2149	19000	11.3	3	LG	
Cheney, E. H.	2120	3429	2515	2723	92.4	4009	4348	92.2	2	MG	
Chetwynde, Sir George	479	987	479	6627	7.2	987	12445	7.9	3	G	
Cradock-Hartopp, Sir John	1771	3021	1771	2181	81.2	3021	4110	73.5	3	LG	
Crewe, Sir John Harpur	877	1778	877	28056	3.1	1778	36966	4.8	2	G	
Curzon, Nathaniel	4753	9663	4753	5662	83.9	9663	11773	82.1	3	GG	
Dawson, Edward	3303	5203	3376	3376	100	5102	5102	100	1	GG	
Dixie, Sir Alexander	5379	10405	5379	5933	90.7	10405	11115	93.6	3	GG	
Dyott, Richard	464	850	467	5427	8.6	1005	8444	11.9	4	G	
Everett, Henry	1011	1883		2448			3279		3	LG	
Eyre, Vincent	1475	2824								LG	
Farnham, Edward B.	1510	3500								LG	
Fenwicke, Rev. Gerald	1289	1941								LG	
Finch, Charles Wynne	404	674	404	15158	2.7	674	10772	6.3	6	G	
Fludyer, Rev. John	9	6	9	4481	0.2	6	6951	0.1	6	G	
Fowke, Lt. Col. Sir Frederick	1519	2694								LG	
Franks, F. J. H.	2724	5085	2724	2724	100	5085	5085	100.0	1	MG	
Frewen, Edward	3378	4855	4218	7892	53.4	7869	13431	58.6	4	GG	
Goodacre, John	1496	3302	1496	2917	51.3	3302	4478	73.7	4	LG	
Gregory, Mrs Sherwin	589	990	582	6196	9.4	967	5624	17.2	3	G	
Gresley, Sir Robert	506	568	506	3147	16.1	568	8551	6.6	2	G	
Grievesson, Henry	1657	2869								LG	

ROL										
1.	Bateman									
Name	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
	Acres	£GAV	Acres	Total	%	GAV	Total	%GAV	No.	Status
	Leics	Leics	Leics	Acres	Leics	Leics	Gav	Leics	Counties	
Halford, Sir Henry	3001	5425	3053	3053	100	6000	6000	100	2	GG
Hall, Thomas	556	813	556	3239	17.2	916	6197	14.8	3	G
Harrison, Isaac	1058	3498								LG
Hartopp, Edward B.	5423	8186	5423	34190	15.9	8186	13845	59.1	2	GG
Haymes, Robert	1054	2441								LG
Hazlerigg, Sir Arthur	2162	3837	2162	2162	100	3837	3837	100	1	MG
Heap, George	1709	3343								LG
Heycock, Charles	1155	2420								LG
Hinrich, Henry Dent	1134	2121								LG
Holden, Edward C. S.	482	775	482	2028	23.8	775	4806	16.1	2	G
Holdich-Hungerford, Henry	97	192	97	5783	1.7	192	9042	2.1	2	G
Hunt, Rowland	350	944	350	3919	8.9	944	7046	13.4	2	G
Isham, Sir Charles	1118	1674	1118	4230	26.4	1674	7373	22.7	2	LG
Kemeys-Tynte, Col.	699	1757	699	20679	3.4	1755	37566	4.7	6	G
Lamb, Sir Archibald	1172	2222	1172	2638	44.4	2222	3456	64.3	2	LG
Lillingston-Johnson, George	1001	1693								LG
Malet, Colonel Sir Alexander	110	231		2942			2700		3	G
Marriott, Charles	2074	3289	2074	2074	100	3289	3289	100	1	MG
Miles, Roger	1226	2315								LG
Mills, Joseph	1261	1849	1800	13800	13.0	2013	17991	11.2	4	LG
Moore, George	2126	3731	2468	5996	41.2	4431	10424	42.5	5	MG
Mowbray, George	1075	1726		3010			2166		3	LG
Naylor, Richard	2802	5373								MG
Ord, Miss Jemima	1190	2903								LG
Osmaston, John	1	1	344	6637	5.2	560	12611	4.4	3	G
Packe, G. (Hussey in Bateman)	2855	6403	3309	6234	53.1	5139	11807	43.5	2	MG/GG
Paget, T. T.	3950	8948	3950	4782	82.6	8948	10884	82.2	3	GG
Palmer, Frederick	2667	4378	2677	2677	100	4378	4378	100	1	MG
Palmer, Sir Archdale	1242	2862								LG
Palmer, Sir Geoffrey	1692	2970	1692	4120	41.1	2970	7529	39.4	2	LG

ROL			Bateman							
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
Name	Acres	£GAV	Acres	Total	%	GAV	Total	%GAV	No.	Status
	Leics	Leics	Leics	Acres	Leics	Leics	Gav	Leics	Counties	
Pares, E. H.	1485	2584	1485	2974	49.9	2584	6305	41.0	2	LG
Perry Herrick, W (Mrs. in Batem.)	5003	10036	6560	13747	47.7	12295	22325	55.1	4	GG
Phillipps de Lisle, Ambrose	7190	14129	7358	7358	100	15324	15324	100	1	GG
Pochin, Ralph G.	2252	4462	2252	2252	100	4462	4462	100	1	MG
Pochin, William	5817	10044	5865	7791	75.3	10748	14282	75.3	3	GG
Ricketts, Admiral Sir Cornwallis	1552	3090								LG
Rokeyby, Rev. Henry	1289	2438								LG
Severene, John	199	321	199	5546	3.6	321	7294	4.4	5	G
Shakespear, Charles	1716	3379								LG
Stokes, Thomas (Trustees)	1923	3401	1923	2297	83.7	3401	4112	82.7	2	LG
Stuart, Col. William	1449	2527	1439	4931	29.2	2200	7484	29.4	7	LG
Tailby, William	1661	6064								LG
Tayleur, W. H.	1807	2125	1807	3461	52.2	2125	4494	47.3	2	LG
Thwaites, Daniel	2318	3343	2392	4569	52.4	3500	24828	14.1	2	MG
Turville, Sir Francis	699	1509	699	11413	6.1	1509	11458	13.2	4	G
Warner, Edward	1020	4461	2014	6123	32.9	5436	9171	59.3	3	LG
Welby-Gregory, Sir William	1903	2460	1953	16904	11.6	2532	27130	9.3	3	LG
Wilmot-Horton, Rev. Sir William	224	412	224	6036	3.7	400	12055	3.3	5	G
Wingfield, John	144	242	144	3407	4.2	242	5339	4.5	6	G
Wollaston, Major	2074	3100	2196	2196	100	3430	3430	100	1	MG
Worsley-Worswick, Richard	1316	2843								LG
Wynne, William	650	775	682	10556	6.5	1350	6229	21.7	6	G

Appendix VI - The Social and Cultural Networks of the Gentry



Appendix VII: Authority & Influence: The Political Networks of the Gentry



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