

THE DERBYSHIRE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF 1832

By C. E. HOGARTH

DERBYSHIRE in the 18th century returned four members, two for the borough of Derby and two for the county. The franchise in the borough was vested in the corporation and the freemen; in the county, as in all other counties, it was the forty-shilling freeholders who held it. The size of the borough electorate was about six hundred and fifty and remained so throughout the century; the county electorate was much larger and over three thousand voted in the elections of 1701, 1734 and 1768, for which figures are available.

T. H. B. Oldfield, in his *History of the boroughs of Great Britain*, describes the political character of Derbyshire as follows:

The aristocratic influence prevailing in this county is that of the Duke of Devonshire, whose family continue to secure the election of one of the knights of the shire for this last century; and until the last two parliaments, Lord Scarsdale succeeded to the other. The county is now however considered as being half independent.¹

This is not quite accurate, for from 1701 to 1734 the Cavendishes were eclipsed and country gentlemen held the seats. The two families, however, did dominate the political scene. The Curzons returned a member of the family from 1701 to 1761 and from 1774 to 1784. A member of the Cavendish family held one seat from 1734 until 1832, when the first Reform Bill split the county into two divisions. The representation was shared whenever possible between the Cavendishes and the Curzons, or between the Cavendishes and other local country gentlemen. The Cavendishes were accounted whigs and the country gentry tory, though the words were hardly ever used.² The compacts, arranged to save trouble and expense, explain why so few elections were contested. From 1700 to 1832 there were six elections contested and twenty-five uncontested in the county.

The avoidance of a contest was not always easily achieved. The elections of 1761 and 1784 are examples of the peace of the county being preserved at the last moment. In 1761 Sir Nathaniel Curzon, one of the sitting members, was raised to the peerage, and attempted to have his brother,

¹ Vol. III, 127.

² The *Derby Mercury*, which first appeared in 1732, does not use the terms "whig" or "tory" in its election reports from 1734. They are first used in 1832.

Ashton Curzon, succeed him. Sir Harry Harpur entered the field and the duke of Devonshire immediately took steps to prevent a contest.³

Strenuous efforts were necessary before what promised to be a sharp contest was avoided. Sir Nathaniel Curzon added a postscript to a letter of 17 February to Lord Bute:

A friend of mine has been strenuously applied to by the D. of D. in person to entreat me to give the thing up to Sir H. H. (arpur).⁴

Curzon gave way and Sir Harry Harpur joined Lord George Cavendish, the other member. In 1784 Nathaniel Curzon, the eldest son of Sir Nathaniel, now the first Baron Scarsdale, tried hard to contest the second seat in the county and gave way only at the last moment to Edward Miller Mundy.⁵

When contests did take place it indicated either a breakdown in the machinery of compromise and a failure to agree to share the representation, as in 1700, and again in 1701, when Thomas Coke and John Curzon defeated Lord Hartington and Lord Roos, in spite of efforts to have Lord Hartington and Coke returned unopposed,⁶ or a fight between two country gentlemen for the second seat, both candidates accepting the return of one Cavendish, as in 1768. This election also illustrated the Cavendish principle of not interfering in the choice of the second member.⁷ Lord Frederick Cavendish wrote from Chatsworth on 17 November 1767, to the duke who was on his grand tour:

. . . we came to a resolution to be neuter, our reason was this, we saw all the Tory gentlemen and the greatest part of the friends of your family incline to Mr. Clark, the Rutland family and some of your friends to Sir H. Harpur. Your father if he had been alive would certainly have joined the strongest part in hopes of putting an end to the contest and have risked the disobliging of the Rutland Family, but that in our situation we did not think right; to join Sir Harpur we saw would turn the greatest part of the county against us in their hearts, so that we could not do, we thought it best to take no part . . . the tory gentlemen acknowledge our moderation and do not deny but that we may have carried two, but that I think I have said to you before I hope you will never think of unless drove to.⁸

Contests might also occur for quite unexpected reasons. In 1820 Lord George Augustus Henry Cavendish and Edward Miller Mundy were surprised by Doctor Percy Crompton of Nottingham and formerly of Derby, whom the *Derby Mercury* described as an "electioneering celebrity", and who had challenged the borough in 1796. Crompton unexpectedly proposed a third candidate. The candidate, Samuel Shore, was seconded but was not present, nor did anyone seem to know who he was. A poll was demanded and begun. On the following day, before polling recommenced, a letter from Shore was read out to those gathered

³ Alexander Barker to Samuel Bagshawe, 14 February 1761, Bagshawe MSS., John Rylands Library.

⁴ Bute MSS. Transcripts kindly loaned by Sir Lewis Namier.

⁵ Simon Jackson to Nathaniel Curzon, 15 April 1784, Curzon MSS. Also *D.M.*, 15 April 1784.

⁶ *H.M.C.* Cowper MSS., II, 444.

⁷ Sir Lewis Namier, *The structure of politics at the accession of George III*, I, 88-90.

⁸ Chatsworth MSS.

round the husting. It revealed that he was not interested in being a member, that he was eighty-two and was in bed. Crompton upheld the right of the freeholders to select any gentleman as candidate and began to quote authorities. He was interrupted with shouts of "we know all that", but voting went on and was recorded as,

Lord G. A. H. Cavendish	196
E. M. Mundy	195
Samuel Shore	26 ⁹

The two remaining contested county elections were in 1710, when Thomas Coke lost his seat to another country gentleman, Godfrey Clarke, and in 1734 when Lord Charles Cavendish headed the poll in a fight with two country gentlemen and began the long period of uninterrupted representation by members of the Cavendish family.

The influence of the Cavendishes in the borough in the 18th century was even greater than their influence in the county. They held one seat from 1695 until 1847, except for the elections of 1710 and 1713, and the name Cavendish appeared save for the periods 1702 to 1705, 1710 to 1714, and from 1742 to 1754, and 1797 to 1807, when relatives held the seat. They were careful not to press their claims to the second seat which was left to the corporation, but as they were under the Cavendish influence, the tory country gentlemen were hardly done by, and the second member also was mostly a whig. The elections of 1710 and 1713 were exceptional in that they were tory victories. After 1713 the tories did not succeed in returning both members until 1895.

Between 1700 and 1832 there were twenty-five uncontested and ten contested borough elections, or twelve, if the abortive attempts of 1780 and 1796 can be counted as contests. The elections of 1700, 1701, 1710, 1714 and 1734 were four candidate contests between the Cavendish influence and the country gentry. The 1742, 1772 and 1775 contests were between the same two groups but were for the second seat. The 1747 contest was a challenge to both Cavendish candidates by a country gentleman, and the 1748 contest was an unusual triumph for the duke of Devonshire's election manager, Thomas Rivett, who put himself forward as the second candidate and was returned against the duke's candidate, Thomas Stanhope.¹⁰

The contest which created the greatest commotion, perhaps, was the 1775 by-election. Wenman Coke, who had stood and succeeded both for Derby and for Norfolk, decided to move to Norfolk, ultimately to make way for Thomas Coke to take over Derby.¹¹ A person was to hold the borough until Coke was of age, and it was rumoured that he was Sir Harry Harpur. Daniel Parker Coke and John Gisborne fought for the

⁹ *D.M.*, 22 March 1820.

¹⁰ *Namier*, I, 130-1.

¹¹ Georgiana, duchess of Devonshire, to Lady Spenser, 9 October 1774, *Anglo-Saxon Review*, I (1899), 226.

vacated seat, however, and Gisborne beat Coke by 343 votes to 329.¹² Coke promptly petitioned against the result on the grounds that the mayor had illegally admitted non-resident honorary freemen to the vote and refused certain genuine freemen the right to vote. The case was heard before a select committee of the House of Commons from 1 to 8 February 1776. The committee agreed that certain freemen had been deprived of their rights and declared Coke the elected candidate.¹³ The significant omission from the committee's conclusion was the question of the creation of honorary freemen. After 1775, there were no further contested elections in the borough, apart from the abortive attempts of 1780 and 1796, for fifty-seven years. The tory criticism of the whigs after the first Reform Bill was frequently directed to this long lacuna. Sir Charles Robert Colville, in his election handbills during the borough contest of 1832, referred to this episode:

At that period the House of Cavendish felt the tenure of the Borough of Derby insecure, and what did they do? Why — they found it necessary to make 257 of their tenantry Bastard Burgesses to swamp the chartered and independent Burgesses of the Borough.¹⁴

A poll book for the 1847 borough election carries a preface which alleges that the lack of interest in elections in Derby after 1775 was a consequence of the litigation of the Coke case. The experience made it plain, it argues, that the compact between the house of Cavendish and the whig corporation to make spurious freemen, if necessary, for election purposes, rendered any independent opposition futile.

The experience of Daniel Parker Coke in 1780 showed this. He attempted to retain the seat he had won by petition in 1776, but polling had lasted only for an hour when his proposer, Edmund Mundy, "informed Mr. P. Coke that it was the wish of many of the burgesses of Derby that he should decline the Poll, as they found the weight of Honorary Freemen too powerful to be resisted".¹⁵ The election figures at that stage were

Lord George Henry Cavendish	87
Edward Coke, Esq.	80
Daniel Parker Coke, Esq.	7

Oldfield refers to such freemen as "faggots".¹⁶

Tactics of this sort, together with bribery, pressure from landlords on tenants, and loyalties that proceeded from a feudal sentiment, were the inevitable ingredients of electoral processes that were devoid of issues of party and principle. In Derby and Derbyshire, as elsewhere in the 18th century, elections, when held, turned on local issues and personalities.

¹² Poll books in Derby Borough Library.

¹³ Proceedings of the committee to try the merits of the Derby case.

¹⁴ Collection of squibs, broadsides, etc., D.B.L.

¹⁵ *D.M.*, 14 September 1780.

¹⁶ They had caused trouble earlier. In 1742 German Pole beaten by Lord Duncannon, son-in-law of the duke of Devonshire, prepared to petition against the election because of the fake freemen being allowed to vote and the genuine ones not, but he then changed his mind. Chandos-Pole MSS.

No significant changes took place until the first Reform Bill, and even then for many years the customs and convictions of the 18th century existed side by side with the new influences of the 19th century.

In political matters, the quietness that had characterized the years 1780 onwards was ended by the excitement over the passing of the 1832 Reform Bill. Derby was no exception to the riots and tumult that occurred elsewhere. Even so, the May 1831 elections in the borough and the county were not contested. The sitting members for the county in 1831 were Lord George Augustus Henry Cavendish, who had sat for the county since 1797 without a contest save for 1820 when Dr. P. Crompton forced a comic opposition, and Francis Mundy of Markeaton Hall, Derby. The circumstances of the time were, however, to present the Cavendish influence with an interesting problem. It was clear, from the excitement occasioned by the Reform Bill, that Mundy would be opposed and that an end of the electoral truce in the county was in sight. It also seemed improbable that the tories would bring forth a candidate in favour of the bill. They were, in fact, in obvious difficulty in selecting a candidate. William Jeffrey Lockett, political agent to the sixth duke of Devonshire, wrote to the duke on 26 April 1831:

The meeting of the tories at Chaddesden yesterday was anything but satisfactory to themselves . . . Gisborne . . . has left the field. Sir George Crewe was present and he was proposed as a proper candidate but Lord Scarsdale in a letter and Sir Henry Fitzherbert personally, declared their opinion that he was not enough of a Tory for them. Mr. Arkwright, who also was present, was invited, but the gentlemen had contrived to give him offence before the application was made . . . and he declined the honour. The meeting separated without coming to any conclusion.¹⁷

The problem that confronted the Cavendish influence arose out of the possible effects on future policy of having two whigs returned for the county. Although it was almost certain that two whigs could be returned for the county at this stage, there were sufficient grumbles from various sources at the domination exercised by the Cavendishes to make even this disturbing. Thoughts of this nature were probably at the back of Lockett's mind when he wrote to the duke on 24 March 1831:

. . . Mr. Mundy will certainly be opposed and rejected and from what I can see already it will not be an easy matter to prevent the Whigs from setting up a second candidate.¹⁸

A second whig candidate was brought forward: he was George John Warren Vernon, the only son of George Charles Vernon, the fourth Baron Vernon, and Frances Maria, only daughter of Admiral Sir John Borlase-Warren.¹⁹ The Vernon estate was at Sudbury, a small village twelve miles west of Derby. The invitation to Vernon came from Lord Waterpark of Doveridge Hall, the next village beyond Sudbury. Henry Manners Cavendish, the third Lord Waterpark, was intimately connected with the

¹⁷ Chatsworth MSS. 868. 16.

¹⁸ Chatsworth MSS. 868. 16.

¹⁹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 58, 275.

sixth duke politically, being M.P. for Knaresborough, one of the duke's proprietary boroughs. It may be presumed, therefore, that the decision to run two whigs and to ask Vernon to stand with Lord George Augustus Henry Cavendish was a decision of the Cavendish connexion. The actual invitation was sudden and even peremptory. Vernon wrote to his father on 24 April 1831 about the invitation:

When I say invitation, it hardly amounts to that but I will tell you exactly how the matter stands — Today I was sitting in my room when Waterpark was announced — As soon as he had shut the door he said "George, we want you to go down to Derbyshire — We hear that Gisborne is going to stand and we don't like him. He is not a reputable person, and in case Mundy resigns and no Tory (who will support the bill) should offer himself we must have you . . ."²⁰

The Gisborne referred to was Thomas Gisborne, a descendant of an old Derby family, and M.P. for Stafford in 1830 and 1831.²¹

The risk was taken, then, of bringing forward two whigs, and steps were taken to mitigate the inevitable criticism there would be from the tories. Separate committee rooms were arranged and the duke was assured that

the utmost caution will be taken that no ground may be afforded for the charge, altho' it is sure to be made, that Mr. Vernon as well as Lord George is brought forward by your Grace.²²

Lord Vernon, unappreciative of the delicacy of the matter from the Cavendish viewpoint, wrote to the duke on behalf of his son. The duke's reply explicitly stated the Cavendish electoral principle:

My Dear Lord,

I have received your letter — If I was vexed at not being able to proclaim my support and do all in my power to assist the election of one for whom I feel so much regard as your son, you may imagine how happy I am to find that in all probability there be no opposition to him. My rule of not interfering in the choice of the second member for the county prevented my acting as I would have wished but now there is no-one who has more pleasure in congratulating you than I, my dear Lord

Your sincere and faithful servant,

28th April, 1831.

Devonshire.²³

On the same date, Lockett wrote to the duke expressing his delight that Vernon came forward without any communication with the duke.²⁴

The members for the borough in 1831 were Henry Frederick Compton Cavendish, third son of the first earl of Burlington, who had sat since 1812, and Edward Strutt who had become a member for Derby in the previous year. Edward Strutt was the grandson of William Strutt the cotton spinner and improver of the stocking frame, which had been the

²⁰ Vernon MSS.

²¹ *D.N.B.*, vol. 21, 402.

²² Lockett to 6th duke of Devonshire, 26 April 1831, Chatsworth MSS. 868. 16.

²³ Vernon MSS.

²⁴ Chatsworth MSS. 868. 16.

basis of his financial success.²⁵ William Strutt had also gone into partnership with Arkwright the inventor. Edward and his uncle, Joseph Strutt, were to play an important part in Derbyshire politics, providing, in fact, the financial foundation of the whig group that worked so closely with the dukes of Devonshire.

There had been no contest for the borough since 1775, nor was there one on this occasion, May 1831, despite the fact that, according to Lockett, Henry Cavendish was not popular.²⁶ His speeches, as reported in the local newspapers, were certainly those of his profession, a soldier. If they were spared the diffuseness of many a politician, they had the staccato ring and clipped precision often associated with soldiers.

The unopposed return of four whigs caused the ultra-tory newspaper, the *Derbyshire Courier*, to refer to the election as presenting —

an instance in the annals of the electors (which we trust may be regarded as an exception) of all the members from Derbyshire being returned by the influence of one person.

The whig *Derbyshire and Chesterfield Reporter* on 20 May 1831, quoting this extract from the *Courier*, added —

the individual alluded to by the *Derbyshire Courier* is avowedly the Duke of Devonshire,

and immediately justified the situation by drawing the distinction between undue influence and the influence that naturally attached to intelligence, enlightened views and established and well-merited public leadership. This was to remain a typical attitude for long after the first Reform Bill.

* * *

The 1832 Reform Bill divided the county of Derbyshire into a northern division and a southern division, each returning two members. The northern division consisted of the hundreds of the High Peak and Scarsdale, the southern division absorbing the rest of the county. The northern division was to remain solidly whig between the period of the first and second reform bills, two whigs being returned for everyone of the nine general elections of this period, only two of which were contested, those of 1832 and 1837, and for the two by-elections, those of 1834 and 1853. The former was uncontested and in the latter both candidates were liberals. In the south, after a double whig victory in 1832, there was a liberal debacle and two conservatives were returned for the next five elections, only one of which was contested. The liberals recovered in 1857, and returned both members in that year and in 1865. In 1859 a liberal and a tory were returned. There were three times as many contests in the south as in the north: six out of the nine general elections were contested.

The division of the county added to the interest of Derbyshire politics.

²⁵ *D.N.B.*, vol. 40, 63.

²⁶ Chatsworth MSS. 868.

There was for the Cavendish influence the problem of how many members it might now return. And there was to be the further problem of the relationship between the Cavendish interest and the section of whigs who made themselves responsible for the liberal interest in the southern division. The problems were naturally interrelated and their interrelation is well brought out in the problem that the 1832 election posed for the county: who sits where?

The attitude of the Cavendishes to this problem in general was that in future they should be able to return two members for the county.²⁷ With the excitement of reform still in the air, they were reasonably sure of returning two whigs for the northern division, and almost certainly one for the southern division. Their wishes were revealed in a letter Lockett wrote to Lord Vernon on 20 August 1831.²⁸ He asked Lord Vernon which division his son wished to stand for, but made it quite clear that it was desired that the division should be the north, where he would join Lord George Cavendish, Lord Waterpark standing for the south. Some thought it possible to return four whigs on this occasion, but —

if it was I should be decidedly opposed to the measure. It would be highly unpolitic to exclude the tories altogether from the representation. The general wish of the party is to return three whigs — two for the North one from the South division — and I think this may be effected.

It was equally Lord Waterpark's wish that Vernon should stand for the north. He put it to the duke of Devonshire on 29 August: "If he goes into the North I am quite safe, if not we shall have a hard fight."²⁹ Lord Waterpark was suffering from suspense. Like many others he was anxiously waiting for Vernon to make up his mind.

George John Vernon was an unhappy man. A scholar of no inconsiderable ability, not blessed with robust health, and a man with a sensitive soul, he was finding the conflicting personal relationships and intrigues of party politics even more distasteful than the rough and tumble that electioneering promised to be. He was in a dilemma. He poured out his troubles in a series of letters to his father. In a letter of 23 August he made it plain what was the dilemma.³⁰ It was based on the assumption that two whigs would be returned for the northern division and a whig and a tory for the southern division. Added to this assumption was the certainty that he could be returned for either north or south, and that the return of Lord George Cavendish for the north was certain and either that of Sir George Crewe or Arkwright was certain for the south. It followed, he argued, that if he went north he turned out Thomas Gisborne, a liberal and his friend; if he went south he turned out Lord Waterpark with whom he was similarly situated. There was no solution by switching Gisborne and Waterpark because Gisborne had declared for the north and, even

²⁷ Lockett to the duke of Devonshire, 15 March 1831, Chatsworth MSS. 868.14.

²⁸ Vernon MSS.

²⁹ Chatsworth MSS. 1215.0.

³⁰ Vernon MSS.

if he had not, the possibility of having two Cavendishes for the same division was out of the question.

There were more reasons for Vernon's unease than the mere opposing of friends. He was suspicious of the purposes for which the Cavendish-Strutt "connexion" wanted him. As early as May 1831 he had written to his father about various hints that had been dropped and rumours put out that led him to suppose

that either the Strutt party and those at Derby wish to make the respectability of my family's character and "my pleasing manners" a cloak for their own purposes (in short that I am to be the puppet of which they are to move the strings) or that there is some secret agreement with the Duke of Devonshire . . .³¹

He also disliked appearing to be the nominee of the duke, and he felt that this would happen if he chose the north. Nor would he have as much independence if he represented that area.³² Because of the pressure from the Cavendish interest, Vernon turned to his own small group of friends for advice. One of these, and one of the most efficient members of Vernon's committee, Mr. Baker, drew up a statement in which the whole situation was reviewed.³³ This document was sent to Lord Vernon to help him to assist his son in deciding whether to go to the north or to the south. Baker clarified the issues. There were three aspects of Vernon's problem, he argued. It could be looked at from the point of view of the whigs as a party, from the interests of the "house of Cavendish", and from Vernon's own desires and reputation. He reasoned that as far as the whigs as a party were concerned it was immaterial whether Vernon went north or south: the influence of the dukes of Devonshire and Norfolk aided by the town votes of Chesterfield, Bakewell, Buxton, Chapel, Hayfield and Castleton, would ensure the return of two whigs for the north; and though the Tories would carry one member for the south, especially after the Chandos amendment enfranchising the tenants paying a yearly rent of £50, Vernon's popularity and record would ensure his return for this division. The Cavendishes would, of course, prefer him to go to the north, for it was known from Lord Waterpark that Gisborne was not to the liking of the Cavendish group, and Waterpark himself could not stand for the north. The attempt "to bring in *two* Cavendishes in one division . . . might be resented by many independant (*sic*) men, even amongst reformers . . ." Having Vernon in the north and Waterpark in the south would be ideal from the Cavendish viewpoint. It would mean for Vernon, however, that his security would be entirely dependent upon the interest and friendship of the Cavendish family. It would also be very difficult to avoid Vernon's appearing as a nominee of the duke. If Vernon were to consider his own interest and reputation solely, there should be no doubt about choosing the south. There was his father's property, an effective canvass had already

³¹ Vernon MSS.

³² Rev. John Harrison to S. Forester, 19 August 1831, Vernon MSS.

³³ Vernon MSS.

been made, and independence was assured along with a possible permanency. Nor would his friend Thomas Gisborne be thrown out. Baker concluded his analysis by saying: "As a whig, therefore, I should be almost indifferent, but as a friend of Mr. Vernon I should decidedly recommend the south."

Vernon wrote to the duke on 22 August in somewhat sharp terms. He assured the duke that he desired to meet his wishes, but that the duke could not wish him to cut his own throat: "Now I wish you would candidly therefore take off for a moment your Cavendish spectacles and look at my case fairly."³⁴ He went on to put the reasons against his standing for the north and asked outright what popular plea could he have for taking the decision to go north.

He must have met and discussed the problem with the duke the following day for he wrote immediately from the House of Commons library to his father, dating the letter 23 August, giving an account of the interview. Firmness and resolution were not Vernon's qualities and he wavered. He put the duke's case to his father. He said that the duke seemed anxious for him to go to the north and that if he did much expense and annoyance would be avoided.³⁵ The duke knew he was very strong . . .

as any man must be who has £50,000 per annum in the County, but that all he desired was that the County should be properly represented, and that Waterpark was a very proper man which he was aware Lord George was not but that people would indulge him on account of his age . . .

There seems a little inconsistency here on the part of the duke.

The interview seems to have turned Vernon towards accepting the north. Despite his conviction that he would succeed in the south this time, victory would "make enemies of the Cavendishes — the Strutts & Lord Melbourne and all their supporters would go with the Cavendish member". There was also the problem of expense. Future contests in the south would involve "spending some money in it to keep up a separate interest" which his father was not prepared to do. Vernon sought escape from his problem by hoping the counties might not yet be divided! He had, of course, voted for the whole Reform Bill, but he salved his conscience by believing that the Chandos amendment had violated the principle of the bill.

Three days later it was clear that Vernon's close friends had swung him back to favouring the south. Vernon had apparently informed the duke in writing of his objections to standing for the north.³⁶ Lord Waterpark was likewise informed, much to his discomfort, for he could not see why Vernon should oppose him rather than Gisborne.³⁷ Mr. Nightingale, a member of Vernon's committee, told Waterpark of this decision. Jeffrey Lockett, the duke's agent, happened to be present and

³⁴ Chatsworth MSS. III.6. 4.

³⁵ Vernon MSS.

³⁶ Lockett to the duke of Devonshire, 26 August 1831, Chatsworth MSS. 868. 24.

³⁷ Lord Waterpark to the duke of Devonshire, 3 September 1831, MSS. 1215. 1.

“immediately observed that it was not impossible Lord George might also stand for the South . . .”. This form of pressure on Vernon by switching Lord George Cavendish and Lord Waterpark was no unpremeditated threat of Lockett’s. In his letter of 26 August to the duke, already quoted, he had said that if Vernon persisted in standing for the south it would deserve considering whether or not to bring down Lord George to oppose him. He had added that Mr. Nightingale seemed to be not a little troubled by this threat.

The next move came unexpectedly, but it was a change of no significance for this tangle of personalities and politics. Lord George August Henry Cavendish accepted a peerage. It came as a surprise as apparently he had not been inclined towards accepting one. The duke decided that Lord William Cavendish should take his place. He wrote to Lord Waterpark on 7 September: “William will go down directly to stand for the County”.³⁸

The substitution of Lord William for Lord George made no impact on the Vernon problem. His persistence in refusing the north was an irritating obstacle to the Cavendish plan for the two whigs in the northern division and a whig — tory electoral truce in the south where it was hoped the tory Sir George Crewe and Lord Waterpark would be returned without a contest.

There is a gap in the material of this story of political permutations until February of the following year when a new element was added by the withdrawal of one candidate. Sir George Crewe of Calke Abbey, near Derby, announced that he was withdrawing his candidature for the southern division. The continuing 18th-century attitude of regarding elections in terms of personalities, local issues and local rivalries is seen in the suggestion which the secretary of Vernon’s committee, Henry Mozley, immediately put to Vernon. He suggested that Vernon wrote to Crewe asking now for his support as many of his friends would have used their second votes for Vernon anyway.⁴⁰ Both Vernon and his father wrote. Sir George Crewe replied on 6 March that he would give every proof of friendship and agreed that Vernon was a very fit and proper person to represent the county. He also hinted at the efforts made to prevent a possibility of himself and Vernon sharing many votes:

We have many mutual friends amongst the Voters and should have had a great many more but for the mean and paltry efforts which were made, striving to avoid this effect being produced.⁴¹

It can be assumed that the efforts so made were not motivated by whig party principle. Those elements who thought two whigs could be returned for the south would be against it, so also would those whigs in the Cavendish interest who wanted Lord Waterpark to be a candidate. But the problem of two whigs or not for the south had now to be considered in earnest.

³⁸ Chatsworth MSS. 767. 18.

³⁹ Lockett to the duke of Devonshire, 8 September 1831, Chatsworth MSS. 868. 25.

⁴⁰ Mozley to Sir George Crewe, 23 February 1832, Vernon MSS.

⁴¹ Sir George Crewe to Lord Vernon, 6 March 1832, Vernon MSS.

The group of whigs whose main candidate was Vernon at last approached Waterpark. Not unnaturally, Waterpark received the approach without enthusiasm. He informed Mr. Nightingale in a letter early in July that it was too late now to succeed and that he intended publicly to withdraw. In a second letter Nightingale managed to persuade Waterpark to suspend his resignation as steps would be speedily taken to prove that there was still a fair chance of success. When Waterpark met Nightingale at the assizes in July and found that nothing had been done, he again declared his intention of withdrawing. Mr. Joseph Strutt and others, who had a foot in the two camps of Cavendish and non-Cavendish whigs, advised him to remain a candidate. The whole story came out at a meeting of the South Derbyshire whigs held in the King's Head Inn on 4 August. A memorandum was drawn up of the proceedings.⁴²

At the meeting, the mixed feelings of Lord Waterpark for Vernon clearly emerged. Whilst admitting that he could not assess the relative strength of the parties, he claimed that the tories would give him their second votes to throw out Vernon. He was asked if after an enquiry and examination it was found that the whigs would not be able to return two members, he would retire. He replied that if he had a successful canvass he saw no reason why he should withdraw: he had lived longer in the county and though he had the most friendly feelings for Vernon he did not feel inclined to give up the prospect of being returned. The difficulty was put off by a resolution that the matter should be discussed again after the examination into the estimated strength of the whig support. In the end, Vernon and Waterpark stood against Sir Nigel Greisley.

What light had this negotiation for members of over a year and a half thrown on early 19th-century politics? The 18th-century practice of the choice of candidates for county elections by either the landed gentry or the great noble houses,⁴³ and the sharing of the representation between them if necessary was attempted but was attended with complexities. The addition to the county's representation and the interest in political reform complicated the Cavendish plans for the 1832 elections. They would have liked to extend the 18th-century custom to returning three whigs, permitting a tory to share the southern division of Derbyshire. The emergence of a second group of whigs and the sensitive and sincere behaviour of their candidate baulked any neat solution of the county representation from the Cavendish viewpoint. Political principles had still not developed to hold a party together, but financial considerations were tending to pull separate groups of similar outlook together. The lack of any organized relationship between the two sections of whigs and the attractions of joining forces in order to share in an electoral subscription are seen in two letters which John Harrison, a friend of Vernon, wrote to William Baker very soon after the conference at the King's Head. The decision to support Lord Waterpark for the south had not yet been

⁴² Vernon MSS.

⁴³ Namier, 92-3.

taken, and Harrison wrote on 6 August that it would be unwise to begin a separate canvass for Vernon. If they did, "the whigs in the Cavendish Interest would be particularly sore on this hand, and might make it an excuse for urging Lord Waterpark to stand at all hazards".⁴⁴ At this stage, Harrison was hoping that the Cavendishes would not bring forward Lord Waterpark out of consideration for Vernon. Furthermore, beginning a canvass would preclude their sharing in a purse which, if a miserable pittance at the moment, "would become more liberal in case of a cordial union of the liberals".⁴⁵ Cordial union of political groups presupposes a degree of political accord rooted in political principle; that was in the future, but pressures to bring it about were beginning to make themselves felt.

The course of the contest in South Derbyshire was lively. Waterpark and Vernon found themselves opposed by Sir Roger Greisley. Sir Roger Greisley was the son of Sir Nigel Bowyer Greisley, 7th baronet, of Drakelow Park, Burton-on-Trent, whom he had succeeded in 1808. In 1826 he had considered attempting a nearby constituency, Newcastle under Lyme.⁴⁶ He went farther afield and was returned for Durham city in 1830 and New Romney, Kent, in 1831.

The dispute over candidates for South Derbyshire gave Greisley the opportunity of getting in his advertisements well ahead of Vernon and Waterpark. Greisley's first advertisement appeared in the *Derby and Chesterfield Reporter* in early August. Vernon's first advertisement did not appear until 13 September and Waterpark's 21 October. Greisley's advertisement was clever. In answer to the whig claim to be the champions of the Reform Bill he posed the question of what was the use of constitutional reform without agricultural and industrial reform. As soon as Waterpark's advertisement appeared Greisley attacked, perhaps irritated by the disappearing hope of sharing the return with Vernon. In an advertisement he sneered at Waterpark as the nominee of the Strutts from whom he made no attempt to disguise his attitude of the superior country gentleman to the nouveaux riches.⁴⁷ A balanced reply came on 17 October in the rival newspaper, the *Derby Mercury*, which until 1835 was only lukewarm tory, when an anonymous correspondent pointed out that Greisley himself had been sent to parliament by the interest of the marquis of Londonderry and that it was therefore unfair to denounce Lord Waterpark for being the nominee of the duke of Devonshire. The *Reporter* commented on the controversy in an editorial of 18 October making clear what in fact was the whig attitude to influence. It drew a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate "interest". It gave as examples of wrong influence the actions of the duke of Newcastle at Newark and the marquis of Exeter at Stamford "where these noblemen

⁴⁴ Vernon MSS.

⁴⁵ Harrison to Baker, 7 August 1832, Vernon MSS.

⁴⁶ *D.N.B.*, vol. 8, 596, gives the family name as Gresley but adds that he usually wrote his name as Greisley, which is the only form I have seen.

⁴⁷ *Derby and Chesterfield Reporter*, 4 October 1832.

have not been content with the legitimate influence of property, but have expelled the inhabitants from their shops and houses because they dared to exercise a right conceded to them by the Constitution in opposition to their Parliamentary interest". The duke of Devonshire, the editorial went on, Lord Waterpark and the Strutts were reformers of these very abuses. There could be no criticism of the influence of property when allied to a public spirit of this quality. This was the whig attitude to the aristocracy. The difference from the 18th century was that the influence of the aristocracy was more tempered by public opinion. George Augustus Henry Cavendish had written to the sixth duke of Devonshire on 20 November 1830: "I am favourable to moderate reforms, which to satisfy the County I presume must be brought forward."⁴⁸ But so far it was a change of emphasis, not of principle.

The election was not fought without violence and attempts at intimidation. Both the chief local newspapers carried a curious story of how Lord Chesterfield's steward informed the pottery firm of Floyd, Till and Wildin at Chesterfield that unless their workers voted for Greisley, Lord Chesterfield would pull down the whole of their pot works.⁴⁹ Apparently Lord Chesterfield owned a ditch on which the outer wall of the works was built. If he claimed the ditch the wall would have to come down. Handbills were distributed containing this story which brought about an acrimonious correspondence in the press. The steward denied the story; Wildin, one of the partners of the firm, vouched for its truth.

Another allegation was that Greisley had called on one of Lord Anglesey's tenants telling him that he had a note from the marquis, his friend, that he wanted his tenants to vote for Greisley. Later, one of the marquis's agents came round saying the tenants were to vote as they wished. Thus tricked, the tenant wrote to the *Mercury* on 12 December, publicly affirming his intention of not voting for Sir Roger Greisley.

True or not, these stories were examples of the accepted conventions of influence. There are no recorded cases of organized force being used in this election but scuffles and disorders occurred on a scale sufficient to warrant the use of special constables, especially at Greisley's meetings.

The main election issue was, of course, reform and the whigs made great use of the tory opposition to the passing of the Reform Bill. It was, no doubt, the association of tory and reactionary that was responsible for the decision to substitute the word conservative for tory which the tories were moving towards.⁵⁰ Greisley's experience in the election campaign was typical. On nomination day, 15 December, he said:

Among other nicknames, they had bestowed upon him that of Tory. Upon his honour, he sincerely wished that the word Tory was entirely expunged from the political vocabulary.

⁴⁸ Chatsworth MSS. 695. 52.

⁴⁹ *D.M.*, 12 December; *D. & C.R.*, 6, 13 December 1832.

⁵⁰ E. Halevy, *History of the English people*, 66.

Polling days were the 18 and 19 December and resulted in a resounding victory for the two whigs with Vernon at the top of the poll.

G. J. Vernon	3,036
Lord Waterpark	2,839
Sir Roger Greisley	1,952

It was a high poll, 4,789 of the 5,541 registered voters going to the poll.⁵¹

In the northern division of the county, Thomas Gisborne persisted in his determination to stand despite being disliked by the Cavendish "connexion". From 5 July onwards his electoral advertisements appeared alongside those of Lord William Cavendish. But in September a determined effort was made by a Chesterfield group to persuade Sir Thomas Denman of Stoney Middleton to stand. Denman was having a brilliant legal career which was crowned when he became Lord Chief Justice. He had sat for Nottingham from 1820 to 1826 and again in 1830 and was well known for his advocacy of legal reform.⁵² The *Reporter* alleged on 3 September that a petition with over a thousand signatures had been organized in the High Peak.

If the Cavendish "connexion" was singularly failing to get its way over candidates, so also did it fail to avoid a contest. The Tories brought forward Sir George Sitwell of Renishaw Hall, in the north of the county, a few miles above Chesterfield. Sir George Sitwell was the son of the first baronet, Sir Sitwell Sitwell.⁵³

In his election addresses Sitwell never referred to himself as a Tory, nor even expressed regret that others so referred to him. He constantly maintained that he was standing on independent principles which he defined as "the pursuance of a line of conduct alike uninfluenced by individual or party feelings, supporting such measures, by whomsoever brought forward as will tend to promote the prosperity of the State . . .".⁵⁴ This was the attitude of the 18th-century country gentleman. Statements of vague general principles at this time came in for attacks in the whig press. The *Derby and Chesterfield Reporter* felt that this vagueness justified referring to Sitwell as Sir George Standstill. The local newspapers in general were playing an important part in sharpening political differences, and the appearance of the leading article in particular was focusing issues for the public. The *Derby and Chesterfield Reporter* was staunchly liberal from its founding in 1823. The *Derby Mercury* which tried to be independent found that the introduction of the leading article in 1822 made neutrality difficult. Even so, it was not until 1835 that it became a consistently conservative newspaper.⁵⁵

The election was much less lively than that in the south or in the borough.

⁵¹ *D. & C.R.*, 20, 27 December 1832. These figures are also given in the preface to the poll books of 1841 (in D.B.L.) for the southern division. A poll book of 1832 gives slightly different figures.

⁵² *D.N.B.*, vol. 14, 359.

⁵³ Burke's *Peerage and baronetage*, 16th ed. rev., 1847.

⁵⁴ *D. & C.R.*, 5 July 1832.

⁵⁵ The Derbyshire newspaper press 1720-1825, 123-4. Unpublished thesis, 10830 D.B.L.

Polling day arrived without any particular excitement and even polling petered out on the first day, 20 December, when Sitwell found himself so far behind that he withdrew. The result was announced on the day before Christmas at a special county court at Bakewell:

Lord William Cavendish	3,377
Mr. Thomas Gisborne	2,384
Sir George Sitwell	1,193 ⁵⁶

By contrast, the borough was hotly contested. The two whig candidates were Henry Frederick Compton Cavendish, third son of the first earl of Burlington, a colonel in the Second Dragoon Guards, and Edward Strutt. Both were the sitting members. The man who was to cause all the liveliness and the first contest since 1796 was Sir Charles Henry Colville who made an outspoken attack on the influence of the dukes of Devonshire. Sir Charles Henry Colville had married into a Derby family and acquired a family seat at Duffield, five miles north of the town.⁵⁷

Before the campaign opened he made his intentions quite clear to the duke. He proposed to attack a system not the duke personally. He wrote on 13 June:

My Lord Duke,

As I have thrown down the gauntlet against the Corporation of Derby — both against the influence under your Grace, in the nomination of both the members — and against its irresponsible municipal misgovernment it would be a *relief to my feelings* if I might be permitted to assure you that in any observations I make on those subjects it is my earnest intention not only to avoid giving allusions which might be considered in the slightest degree disrespectful to your Grace but to avail myself of every opportunity of expressing what I sincerely feel the sentiments of my highest respect.

I will oppose your nomination by every open means in my power — I will expose the effete and unjust corporation by every means in my power but I shall not feel the less warmly grateful to your Grace for many acts of kindness . . .⁵⁸

Colville no doubt found this attack on the Cavendish influence most useful to cover the tory inadequacy, in the eyes of so many of the electorate, as the opponents of the Reform Bill. He clearly exploited this approach and his electoral advertisements scornfully referred to reform as a mockery so long as Derby remained in the hands of the “dependent portion of the corporation”.⁵⁹ Handbills were put out reminding the electors of the election of 1774 when “the House of Cavendish . . . found it necessary to make 257 of their tenantry Bastard Burgesses to swamp the chartered and independent Burgesses of the Borough”. In his nomination speech on 13 December he referred to himself as the leader of the independent party of Derby, a party that had long been smothered and kept down.⁶⁰

The usual defence of influence was made. Edward Strutt in his speeches

⁵⁶ Poll book in D.B.L.

⁵⁷ Burke's *Peerage and baronetage*, 17th ed., 501.

⁵⁸ Chatsworth MSS. 1193. 2.

⁵⁹ *D. & C.R.*, 21 June 1832.

⁶⁰ *D. & C.R.*, 13 December 1832.

justified the exercise of influence where high rank was united with talent. He also drew a distinction between an influence which convinced the understanding and one that controlled the will. This was all very easy for a reformer in an atmosphere of reform.

The group of country gentlemen supporting Colvile had, however, their own ideas of influencing voters. A committee to secure his return was formed and one of their decisions was to discover grounds of objections to the voting qualifications of possible opponents. The minutes of a committee held on 13 September reveal the following decision:

The reports of those appointed to wait upon the non-registered voters so far as answers could be obtained from them were presented to the Chairman, when the lists were again taken into consideration. Resolved that every exertion be used to obtain information to enable the Committee to object to those who may be found unfavourable to Sir Charles Colvile's Election.⁶¹

Lists of persons, addresses and grounds of objection were drawn up under the headings of the various parishes. Objections included non-payment of taxes (this against a schoolmaster), pauper, rates paid by sister, home in sister's name and many others. A similar technique had been carried even farther in the 1826 election at Leicester. Poor-law officers attended the polling-booths with records to challenge the whig voters' qualifications, the device being made possible by a special arrangement of polling pens at each booth which indicated for whom the electors were going to vote and gave the officers time to prepare their challenges.⁶²

The topics of issue in the borough election included, in addition to the chief topic of reform, the corn laws and the ballot. Strutt was radical by comparison with Colonel Cavendish, being both for the election by ballot and for free trade in corn. Both Cavendish and Colvile were against the ballot; nor was their position over the corn laws substantially different. Reform was a burning topic in Derby, and it was surprising that it was Strutt who proved most to their liking. Polling took place on 11 and 12 December. The result was as follows:

Henry Frederick Compton Cavendish	716
Edward Strutt	884
Sir Charles Henry Colvile	430 ⁶³

The borough and the county had thus returned six whig members and contributed their full share to the debacle of the tories in the country. In between the 1832 and 1868 reform bills this whig monopoly was to occur only once again, and this due to the peculiar behaviour of one of the candidates. Even so, it was only in the southern division of the county that the whig-liberal hold was to be broken.

The Derby and Derbyshire elections had shown that nothing definite in the way of party organization had yet appeared. They had also shown

⁶¹ Proceedings of C. H. Colville's committee (10,007 D.B.L.).

⁶² A. Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester, 1780-1850*, 1954, 151.

⁶³ In the prefaces to the poll books of 1859 and 1865 slightly different figures have been given: Cavendish 721, Strutt 888, Colvile 425.

that the Cavendish influence might have much difficulty in dealing with the southern part of the county. Furthermore, the days of the simple solution of their nominating one candidate for the county and allowing the country gentlemen to nominate the other seemed to be over, especially in view of the interest which the issue of reform had raised in the public mind and the generally increased interest that the public were showing in elections. The impact of reform on the customary procedure was well revealed in the Cavendish reasons for inviting Vernon to stand for the county in 1831. The offer to Vernon had been conditional on the resignation of the tory member and the failure to find another tory who would support the reform bill. Waterpark commented upon past and present during his nomination speech in 1832, making a virtue out of a necessity. He "alluded to the manner in which the election for the County had been settled at the Bell Inn, Derby. One member was generally nominated by the duke of Devonshire, and one by the Tories. Then came the farce of a public election. This dictation happily was put an end to".⁶⁴ Limited, and for different reasons from 18th-century limitations, would have been a more accurate conclusion.

⁶⁴ *D.M.*, 12 December 1832.