

## THE COMMUNITY ORIGIN OF THE LEWES GUY FAWKES NIGHT CELEBRATIONS

by James E. Etherington

*It is the contention of this paper that the annual Lewes Guy Fawkes Night celebrations and the bonfire societies established to organise them had, during the latter half of the 19th century, an underlying social dimension. The analysis of the historical data gathered in support of this contention is elaborated through a sociological perspective, utilizing specifically the key concepts of 'community' and 'social network'.*

On the evening of each 5th November the principal streets of Lewes are thronged by thousands of inhabitants and visitors who come to witness the celebrations held in the town to commemorate the Discovery of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Unlike the back-garden family affairs that are more typical of the rest of the country the annual celebration in Lewes is a highly organised event carried out in a colourful and elaborate manner. Arranged by local clubs called 'bonfire societies' the celebrations involve large torchlit fancy dress processions accompanied by numerous bands, firework displays and bonfires. Although dating back into the 18th century the celebrations did not take on their now traditional organised form until the early 1850s, when bonfire societies were established in an attempt to eradicate the riotous proceedings previously witnessed in Lewes each 5th November.

While retaining a concern for public reaction and providing a release for the individuals involved the societies evolved a repetitive and increasingly ritualised annual event. Both historians and anthropologists have noted that a characteristic of recurrent events is a sustaining and strengthening of social solidarity and sense of community among the participants.<sup>1</sup> Malcolmson remarks how annual events provide 'the principal occasion for

individuals to come together in order to reaffirm social relationships' arising from ties of kinship, friendship, and neighbourliness.<sup>2</sup> This conclusion however remains a gloss, the manner in which social solidarity is manifest through an event not being supported by empirical data. The purpose of this paper is to consider evidence that may substantiate such a claim in relation to the Lewes celebrations.

### COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL NETWORK: RELEVANT WORKING CONCEPTS

If the celebrations are to be considered a symbolic manifestation of community it is necessary first to be clear what is meant by 'community'. This concept is the focus of considerable debate in sociology, proving illusive and difficult to define,<sup>3</sup> but although a lack of conceptual clarity exists certain elements are common to the various definitions. They tend to rest on the traditional notion of *gemeinschaft* as defined by Tonnies in which the sociological consequences of the three central aspects, blood, place and mind, are kinship, neighbourhood and friendship.<sup>4</sup> These social relationships in turn support a cohesive, stable and traditional community with a strong homogenous culture. With reference to four variables, rural, urban, past and present, some social scientists argue that

community life is only able to exist in the rural past. Growing urbanism in contemporary society results in growing impersonal relationships, social disintegration and destruction of community life, the consequence of which is the invalidation of 'community' as a useful analytic concept.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless there is a reluctance to discard the concept altogether, either as a method of analysis or as a social reality. Those supporting its retention rightly argue that while the traditional, romantic notion of community has to be modified to take account of the influence of wider society, locally orientated social structures, interaction and perceptions continue to exist. Researchers have found that contrary to various theoretical formulations aspects of community life are maintained in urban areas, particularly in identifiable 'neighbourhoods' where existing close social ties give rise to a sense of community.<sup>6</sup> In this context community becomes a subjective assessment of the situation, perceived and constructed by the actors themselves. It may be something they desire or perceive as a reality and as such becomes a social rather than a sociological construct. But if this conception of community is to be shown to exist it is essential that it is grounded on empirical evidence.

The most important factor determining the existence of community is the web of social relationships existing between people living in a geographically defined place. Social network analysis was developed in an attempt to understand the structure of social relationships in urban areas, attention being directed away from a geographically located collectivity called community towards a structure of social relationships that is independent of propinquity. Developed initially as an analytical tool and used extensively by anthropologists studying urban development in Africa, this approach has subsequently been applied to the study of British urban and rural areas.<sup>7</sup> Groups are seen as collectivities held together by networks of social relationships based on a variety of ties including

family, friendship, neighbouring and associational life.

However neither community nor social network is mutually exclusive and, through the activities of the bonfire boys, they will be shown to be closely interrelated. Both contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of social cohesion and may thus be utilised in an analysis of data to support the contention that recurrent events, in this instance the Lewes Guy Fawkes Night celebrations, reaffirm community solidarity.

Nineteenth-century Lewes was too large to be considered a community, but a sense of community and social solidarity can be shown to have existed among the bonfire boys on two interrelated levels. At the level of individual bonfire societies, their formation and recruitment within identifiable localities of the town provides evidence of a neighbourhood orientation among the members arising from propinquity, family relationships and social networks. At a second level, members of the different societies became a total group, drawn together by shared interests. As such the popular notion of community based on 'place' can be extended to include the more 'sociological' conceptualisation of community of function.<sup>8</sup> Social networks among the bonfire boys arising from their extensive membership of Lewes voluntary associations strengthened their social cohesiveness as a total group. At this level of analysis social network, rather than community, is then the more relevant conceptualisation.

#### THE BONFIRE SOCIETIES DEFINE THEIR TERRITORY

The neighbourhood orientation of the Lewes bonfire societies was manifest from the time of their formation. The celebrations became organised in 1853 with the creation of two societies, the 'Lewes' and the 'Cliffe Bonfire Society'. Both took their names from areas of the town, the former from the town itself and the latter from the suburb of Cliffe. In 1856 Commercial Square Bonfire Society was formed

and in the following year the Waterloo Bonfire Society commenced operations, both similarly taking their names from identifiable localities of Lewes. The 'Lewes' Society, as though in recognition that it was no longer the only Lewes society, changed its name, first to the Lewes Town in 1856, and then in 1859 to Lewes Borough. The naming of societies after localities continued throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, the Southover Bonfire Society being formed in 1886, the St Annes Bonfire Society in 1887 and the South Street Juvenile Bonfire Society in 1913.

A number of other minor short-lived associations of bonfire boys originating from the activities of juveniles also manifest neighbourhood orientation. In 1859 reference was made to the 'Rising Generation' of Chapel-hill Bonfire Boys<sup>9</sup> and 1870 saw the formation of a 'new body of Cliffe patriots, the South-street Bonfire Society'.<sup>10</sup> In 1872 there were celebrations by the St Michael's Society and similar juvenile activities in All Saints and Southover.<sup>11</sup> Six years later youngsters formed an association in Albion Street<sup>12</sup> and in 1892 the Sun Street Juveniles, Toronto Terrace Boys and the Waterloo youngsters<sup>13</sup> were also active. Recounting the activities of the 'St Johns Star Society' immediately prior to the First World War, Mr Allen describes how the children of St Johns Street imitated their local society, the Commercial Square.

It was all for kids. We used to, as we got the money out of the jugs, . . . and with that we bought rope down the Corporation yard. We'd sit down picking it and somebody else would go and buy the oil and the wire and us kids, they showed us how to do it round the 'Elephant' (where Commercial Square made their torches) . . . the kids would be sitting on the ground making their torches and those we had for ourselves in the evenings, about four or five in the afternoon . . . We used to shout and sing and things like that and march along the street.<sup>14</sup>

It is sometimes argued that children are an

important influence in developing neighbourhood awareness<sup>15</sup> and such a contention appears to be supported by these youthful groups of bonfire boys.

The neighbourhood orientation of the bonfire societies was also expressed through the territorial adherence of their processional routes which were recorded in their programmes and in the newspapers. The significant feature to emerge from a comparison between Figs 1 to 8, which show the various processional routes, is that the societies rarely encroached on another's territory. Where this does occur it can be attributed to the formation or disbandment of a society or to territorial expansion.

Lewes (Borough) Bonfire Society established its territory in its first year of operation, processing the full length of Lewes and Southover High Streets. In the following year the High Street route was extended to Cliffe Bridge, the boundary between the town and Cliffe. Borough continued to process these routes until 1893 when they were extended to include Lansdowne Place, Friars Walk, Western Road and St Anne's Crescent. Three years later the Society discontinued the 'Southover and All Saints Grand', not returning to this area until 1909 after the Society's reformation following its three years amalgamation with Commercial Square and the disbandment of Southover. At this time Borough focused its activities towards the top of the town, where they were now compelled to have their firesite on land adjacent to the civil prison. Apart from small circuitous routes to east and west of the High Street, Borough confined their processional routes almost exclusively to the High Streets of Lewes and Southover, only relinquishing the latter during the existence of the Southover Society.

Cliffe Bonfire Society had a clearly defined territory, the Cliffe being physically separated from the town by the River Ouse and administratively independent of the Lewes authorities. The Society's processional routes reflected this separate identity. Cliffe adhered to its territory east of the river until 1913 except for

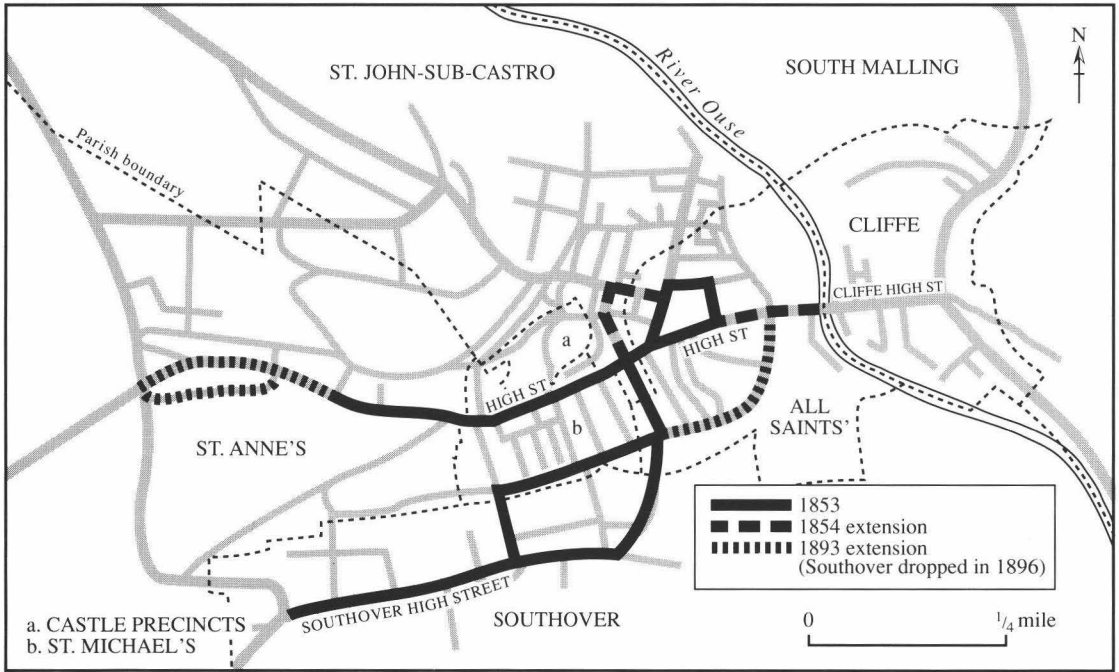


Fig. 1. Borough Bonfire Society procession routes 1853-1905.

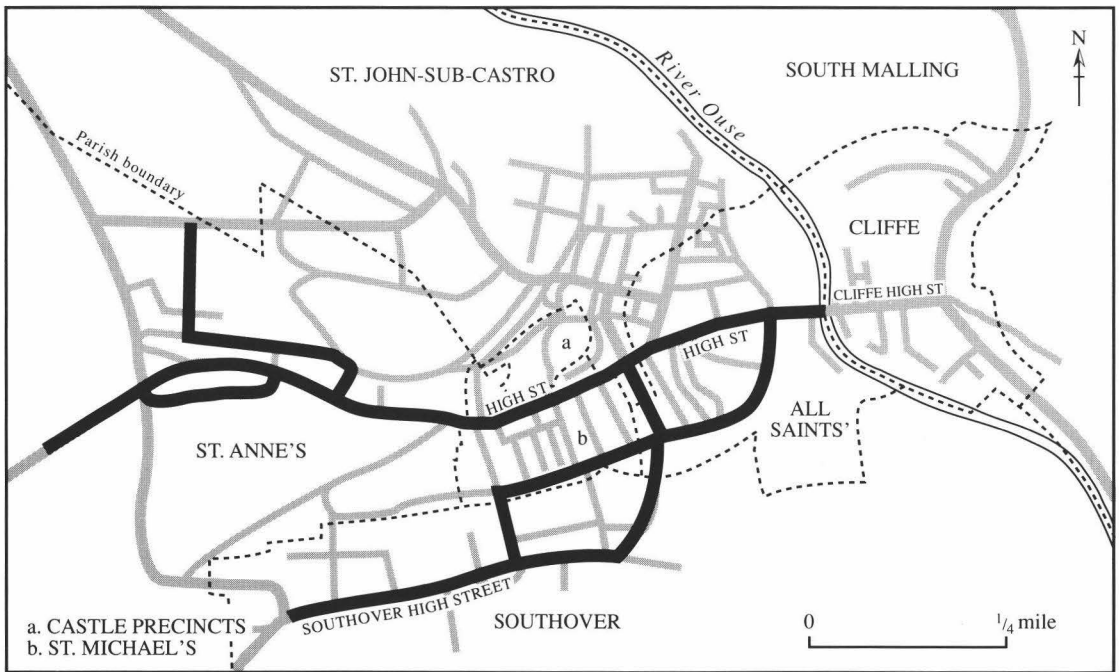


Fig. 2. Borough Bonfire Society procession routes 1909-1913.



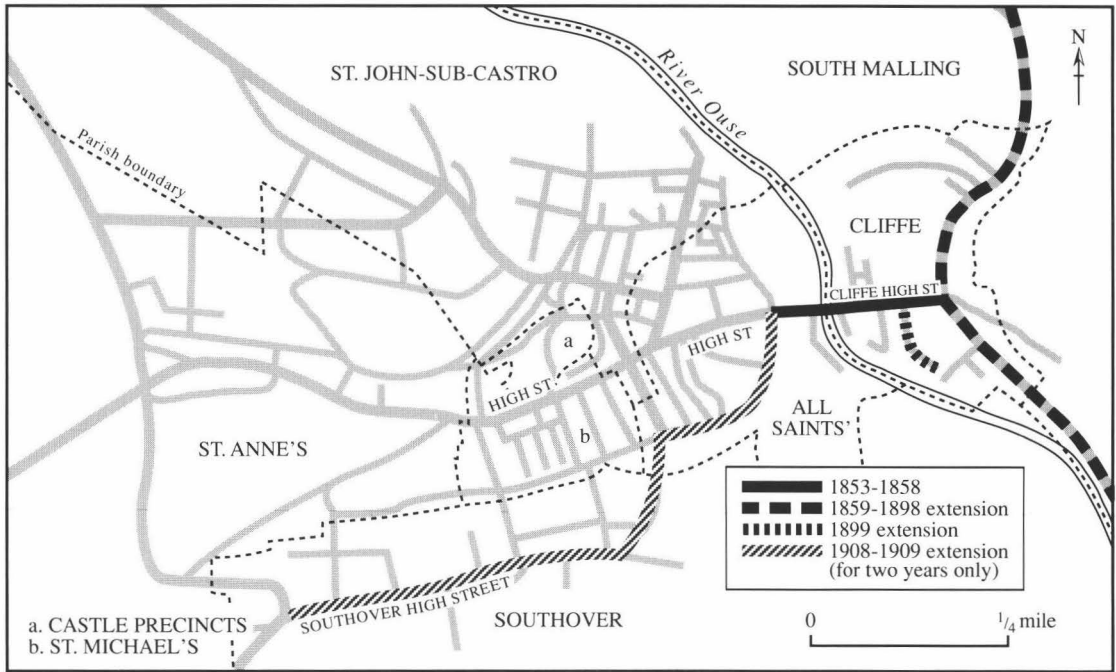


Fig. 3. Cliffe Bonfire Society procession routes 1853-1913.

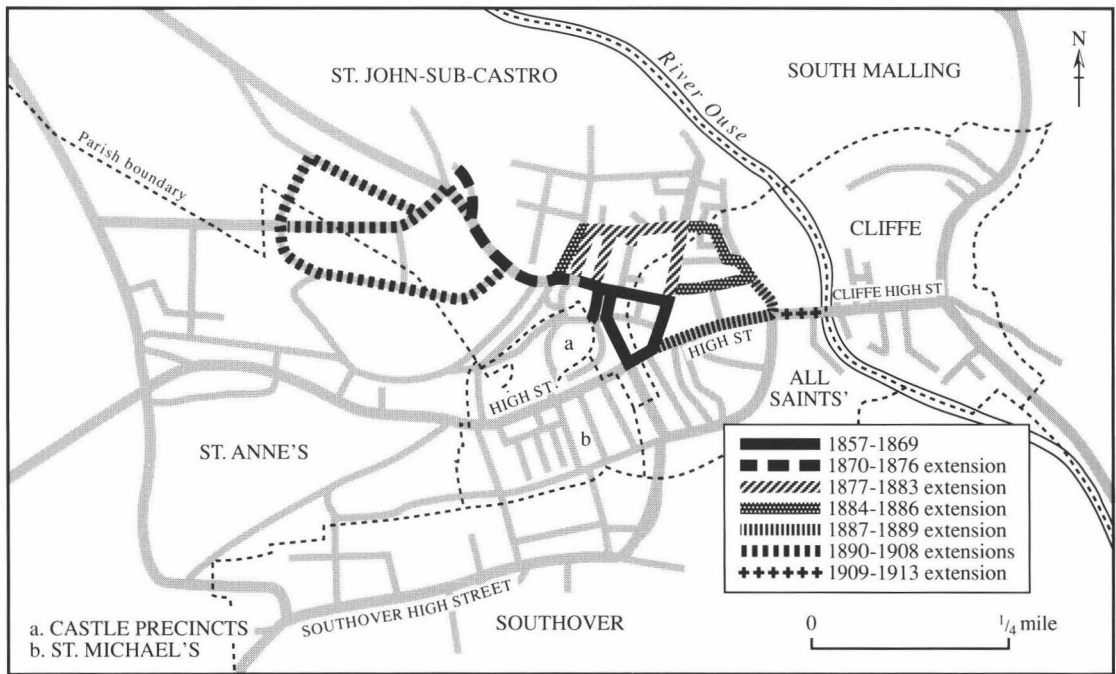


Fig. 4. Commercial Square Bonfire Society procession routes 1857-1913.

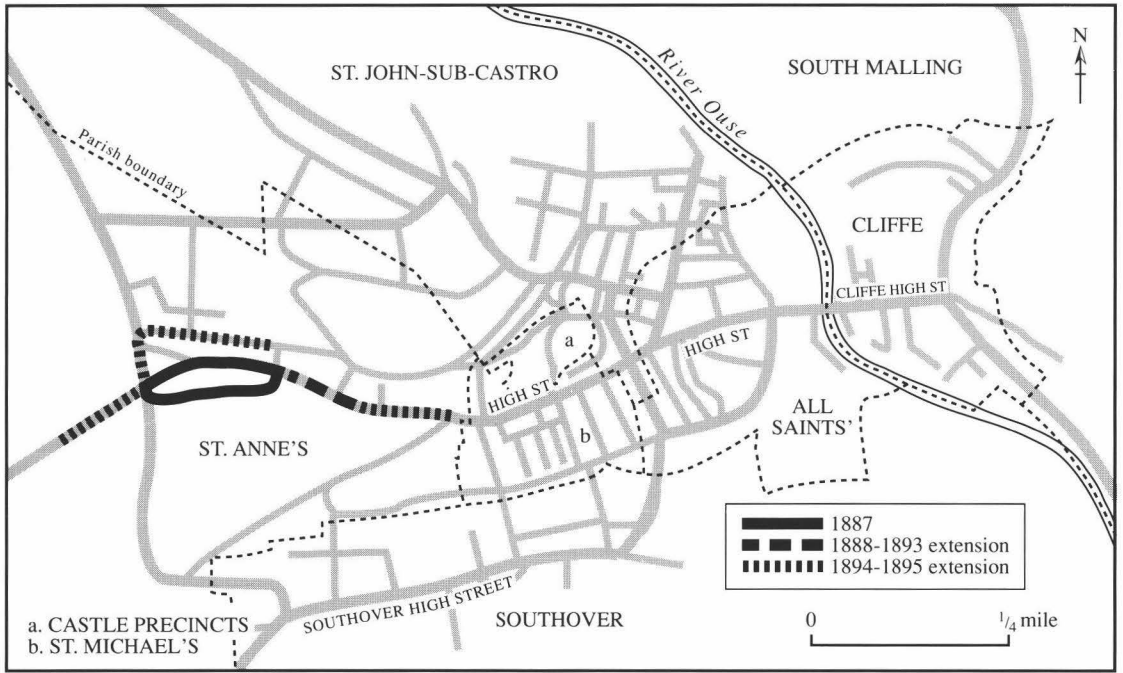


Fig. 5. St Anne's Bonfire Society procession routes 1887-1895.

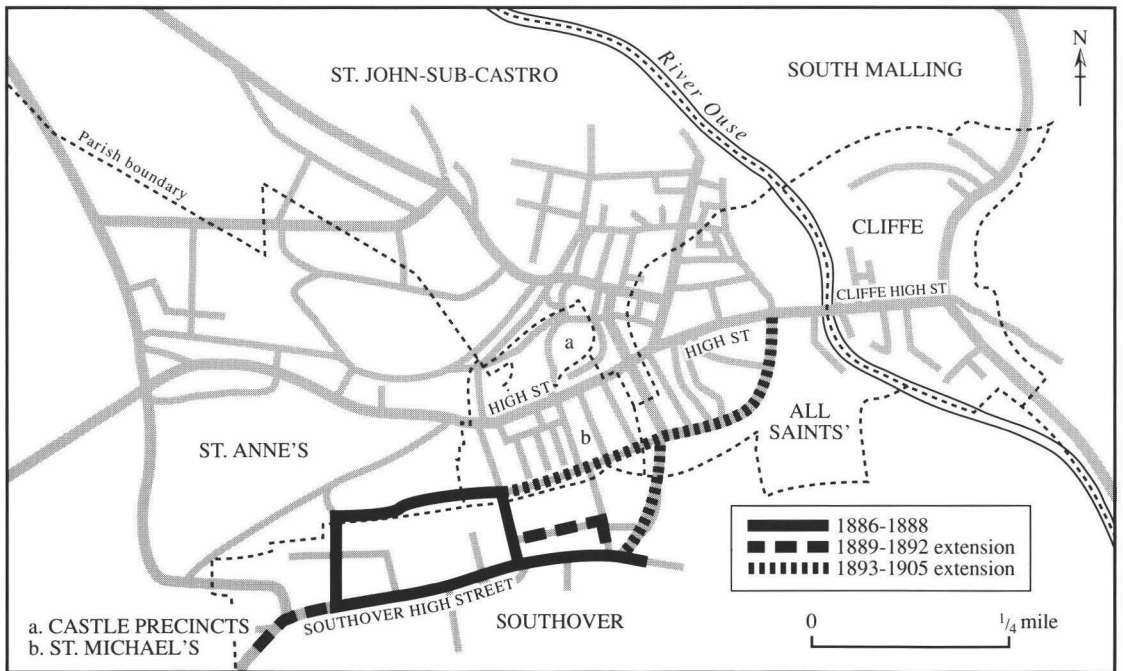


Fig. 6. Southover Bonfire Society procession routes 1886-1905.

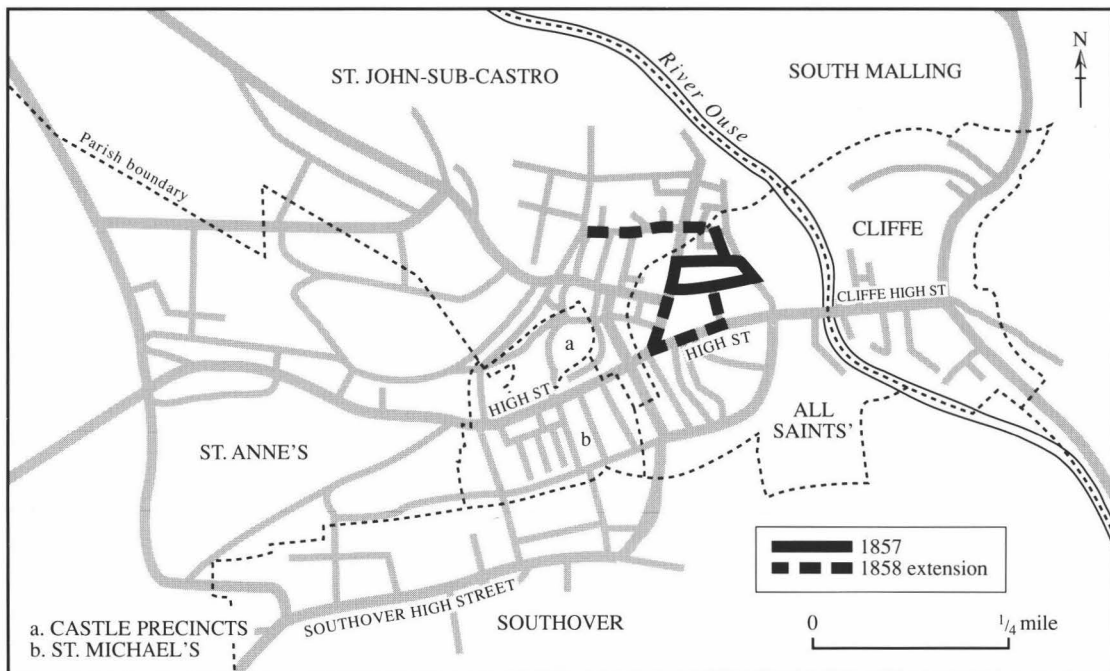


Fig. 7. Waterloo Bonfire Society procession routes 1857-1858.

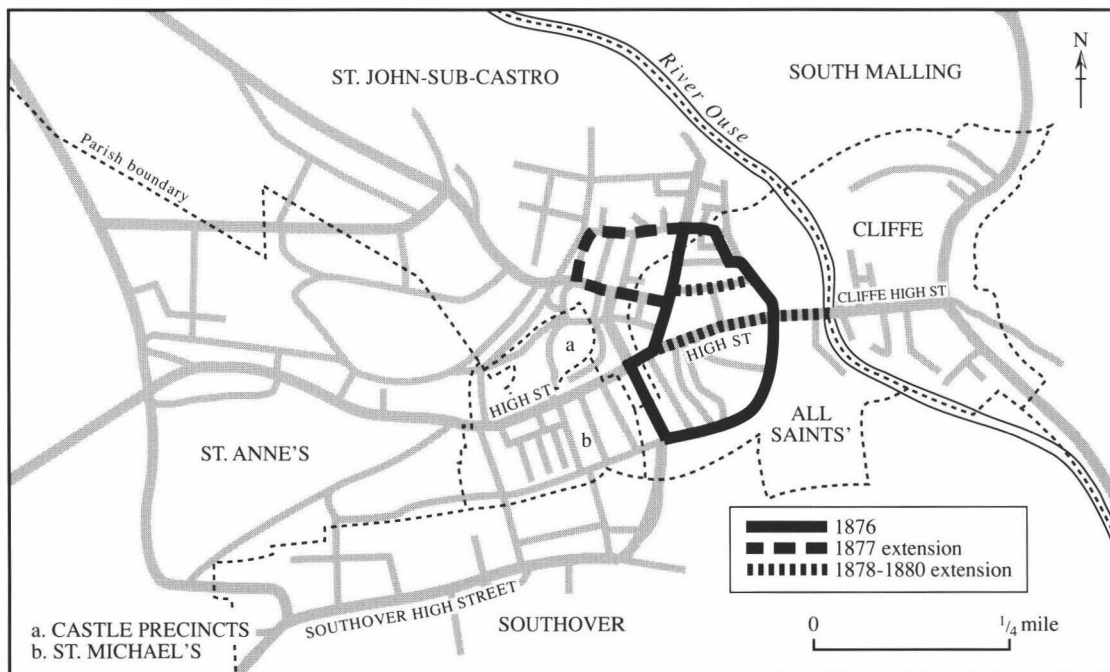


Fig. 8. Waterloo Bonfire Society procession routes 1875-1880.

a brief excursion into Southover, processing to the Swan in 1908 and 1909 when neither the Southover nor Borough Societies were in existence. This route was however relinquished following Borough's re-formation.

Initially Commercial Square Bonfire Society confined its parades to a circular route in the vicinity of its headquarters, the Elephant and Castle, and Commercial Square, but in 1870 an unsettled development of routes commenced. In that year the Society orientated its routes away from the town centre to Wallands Crescent where the residences of a number of affluent townspeople, probably patrons of the Society, were situated. In 1877 the Society took on a new lease of life, increasing the number of processions and expanding the area processed through, but the streets now being covered were within what might be considered Commercial Square territory, being streets in the vicinity of the Square. Further expansion occurred in 1884, but again the new routes did not traverse those of the other two well-established societies, Borough and Cliffe.

Three years later Commercial Square broke with custom by processing into the High Street, the territory of the Borough. This apparent audacious expansion may have been the result of the Society's growing strength or a desire to be seen by the large High Street crowds and to secure a lucrative source for their collecting boxes. The Society again broke new ground in 1887 by processing through Wallands Park where the residences of a number of the Society's wealthy subscribers were situated. Apart from the brief time the Society was amalgamated with Borough, the processional routes remained the same until 1913, except for a short extension to Cliffe Bridge where the Society adopted the practice performed by Borough, the throwing of a blazing tar barrel into the river.

During the brief existence of St Anne's Bonfire Society, probably little more than nine years, its activities remained a very local affair. The processional routes were confined initially to Western Road and St Anne's Crescent and only

extended to include St Anne's Hill and De Montfort Road in the Society's final two years.

Activities in Southover were first reported in 1879<sup>16</sup> when juveniles had a fire of their own and by 1884 fires were being pitched outside the two principal pubs in the area, the Swan and the King's Head.<sup>17</sup> The locality of Southover was very similar to that of Cliffe, being administratively separate from the town and physically bounded by a steep hill rising from Southover to Lewes High Street. Similarly the Society confined its processional routes mainly within Southover, extending beyond the parish boundaries into Station Road, Lansdowne Place and Friars Walk in 1893. However, these streets were contained within the physical boundary of the steep hill leading up to the High Street. Southover continued to traverse these routes until they disbanded in 1905 following the loss of their firesite.

Waterloo Bonfire Society appears to have been active initially between 1857 and 1858,<sup>18</sup> when it processed through streets in the vicinity of Waterloo Place including the High Street in All Saints. The Society was subsequently active again in 1875, but only for a brief period of five years. Although probably not large, this did not prevent the Society having expansionist aspirations, its processions traversing the majority of streets in the parish of All Saints. In 1877 routes were extended to include streets used by Commercial Square and in the following year Waterloo encroached into Borough's territory by processing along part of the High Street. However, they had insufficient support to maintain this expansionist policy, ceasing operations by 1880.

The mapping of the societies' processional routes indicates a significant correlation between the streets through which they processed and the locality from which they took their names. This raises the question of whether the societies were responding to already pre-existing defined territories, the parishes, or something less tangible, areas defined and acknowledged by the bonfire boys themselves. The idea that bonfire

societies were based within the Lewes parishes may be critically examined first.

Evidence suggesting that society territory did coincide with parish boundaries exists. The Cliffe, Southover and St Anne's societies each took their names from the parishes in which they were based and processed almost exclusively within their parish boundaries. Each society had a mock cleric whose appointed task was to address the crowd at the firesite. Parish appears to have been acknowledged by the naming of these men according to the parish in which the society was situated, the 'Bishops' of 'Cliffe', 'Lewes', 'St John's', 'St Anne's' and 'All Saints' attending the firesites of Cliffe, Borough, Commercial Square, St Anne's and Waterloo societies respectively. In 1871 the 'Lord Bishop of St Michael's' officiated at the firesite of the 'Rising Generation of Borough Bonfire Boys'.<sup>19</sup>

This recognition of a parochial basis for territory indicated by procession routes and clerical titles is however misleading. Although the processional routes of Cliffe, Southover, St Anne's and, to a lesser extent, Waterloo appear to be contained within parish boundaries those of the remaining societies were not. Borough marched through all the Lewes parishes except Cliffe. Similarly Commercial Square processed through the parishes of St John's and All Saints. Also Cliffe and Southover did briefly enter All Saints when processing through Friars Walk and Lansdowne Place while Waterloo entered St Johns on their incursion into Commercial Square territory. The ignoring of parish boundaries on these various occasions by the majority of societies indicates they were probably not identifying with an established geographic entity, the parish, but rather neighbourhoods as defined by the societies themselves. That some procession routes were contained within parish boundaries seems more likely therefore to have been coincidental rather than intended.

Having rejected 'parish' as the focus for the societies' territoriality an alternative explanation has to be sought. Defining the concept 'defended

neighbourhood', Suttles refers to residential groups sealing themselves off, through the efforts of gangs, into localities which are both physical entities and result from cognitive maps used by residents. As a consequence groups within these localities 'tend to adopt a rhetoric of struggle which emphasises the mutual exclusiveness of their interests and the omnipresence of force'.<sup>20</sup> While such antagonism may not have existed throughout the year, the strong identification with territory by the bonfire boys has much in common with Suttles' 'defended neighbourhood'. Certainly a cognitive map was imposed on the town during that evening and the neighbourhoods that were circumscribed within this 'creative imposition' were guarded by each group of resident bonfire boys.

The local newspapers often referred to the territorial character of the bonfire societies. The Cliffe's separate identity was acknowledged, being described as 'the community over the water' and their bonfire activists as 'the boys the other side of the water'.<sup>21</sup> Similarly St Anne's bonfire boys are referred to as 'the rising generation at the top of the hill'.<sup>22</sup> The press also indicated the bonfire boys own awareness of their territorial orientation, observing that they 'are quite as jealous of their territory as masters of hounds, and the Cliffe Society would no more think of marching in procession on the West side of Lewes Bridge, than the worthy master of the Southdown Hounds would contemplate drawing a cover belonging to a neighbouring hunt; but although they do not invade each others districts the two societies always fraternize on the bridge'.<sup>23</sup>

The exchanging of fraternal greetings between the two societies on Cliffe Bridge, which occurred from 1857, shows the bonfire boys acknowledging their territoriality. The *Express* describes the ceremony thus:

On this and other occasions there was a good deal of reciprocity between the boys of one side of the water and those of the other. Gentlemen from the classic district of Toby's

Town and the purlieus of St John's affectionately greeted and warmly shook hands with gentlemen from the quiet secluded retreat of Swing Pump, and many a foaming cup was crushed in drinking the pledge that 'Britons never shall be slaves'. There were, but very rarely, some little differences of opinion leading to a few rounds of fisticuffs, which almost invariably terminated by the combatants finding themselves in an unpleasant position in the gutters, trampled over by the surging tide of humanity crowding the streets.<sup>24</sup>

While reflecting co-operation between the societies the incidence of violence also emphasises the strength of feeling territoriality aroused among the bonfire boys. This was similarly acknowledged by the societies when they refrained from collecting money in their boxes<sup>25</sup> while processing through another society's territory.

Rivalry was also manifest through territorial competition surrounding changes in procession routes. These tended to occur at times when new societies were attempting to carve out their own territory from within those of the well-established societies. During the 1850s Waterloo's territory was clearly separate from Commercial Square, but when it reformed in the 1870s Commercial Square had expanded and as a consequence gave Waterloo little scope for manoeuvre. In 1877 Waterloo extended its routes to include Lancaster Street and Abinger Place while at the same time encroaching on Commercial Square territory by processing through Mount Pleasant and West Street. In an apparent response to this 'invasion' Commercial Square, in the same year, likewise processed through Abinger place and Lancaster Street and extended its routes into North Street, previously only traversed by Waterloo. Both societies appear to have been competing for new territory while responding to incursions of the other. During the 1880s, Commercial Square appears to have attempted to remove the threat of a possible re-formation of Waterloo by

progressively annexing streets the latter had previously traversed.

Borough responded in a similar way to the new societies of Southover and St Anne's. Traditionally it processed through Southover, a practice not discontinued until 1896, ten years after Southover Bonfire Society's formation. The two societies shared the same territory during those years, but in 1893 when Southover extended its routes to include Lansdown Place and Friars Walk, an area beyond what might have been accepted part of Southover, Borough responded by processing through the same streets. In the same year Borough expanded northwards into St Anne's, an area being claimed by the recently formed St Anne's Bonfire Society. This territorial expansion in 1893 can be interpreted as Borough's response to the gradual loss of actual or potential territory.

However the only time territorial competition occurred between the established societies followed Borough's amalgamation with Commercial Square. With the suspension of Southover's activities after 1905 Cliffe processed the full extent of the now unoccupied territory. At Borough's re-formation meeting in 1909, the secretary, F. H. Gearing, reported having approached Cliffe requesting the restoration of Southover to Borough.<sup>26</sup> The Cliffe did not respond immediately, but in 1910 the Society ceased to march through Southover, reverting to their traditional territory, leaving the Borough to 're-occupy' their former territory.

#### NEIGHBOURHOOD RECRUITMENT

The strength of feeling manifest through the defence of territory suggests the bonfire societies were expressing a perceived sense of neighbourhood, but if they are to be considered manifestations of community solidarity it must be shown that their members acknowledged the territorial divisions reflected in the societies' activities.

The residential distribution of society members provides overwhelming spatial



evidence to support this contention while the existence of family and social networks provide complementary evidence of the interactional dimension of community living. However before this evidence can be considered three specific difficulties have to be resolved. Firstly, if parish did not define neighbourhood boundaries what did? Secondly to which society did an identified bonfire boy belong? And thirdly what was his address at the time of his reported activity?

Apart from Cliffe and Southover, the societies did not have clearly defined physical boundaries. As a consequence society territory, for the purpose of this analysis, is designated according to processional routes and extended to include areas that were not traversed, but to which a society might lay claim, including streets immediately adjacent to processional routes. Thus the area to the north of the Commercial Square's processional routes is included in the Society's territory. Conversely, where a society traversed an area only briefly this is not included, for example Cliffe's two year excursion into Southover. Where societies traversed the same streets it is not possible to define precisely the territorial boundary between the societies. In these instances such streets are included within both societies' territories.

The society to which a bonfire boy belonged was easier to determine, it being assumed that people reported being involved in a society's activities were members of that society unless contrary evidence existed, for example those attending annual society dinners where the press noted they were representing another society. In this way, of the 527 society members positively identified through nominal record linkage,<sup>27</sup> 94.3 per cent (n=497) were members of one society. The remaining 5.7 per cent (n=30) appear to have belonged to two or more societies.

Finally, an address that coincided with the member's period of reported activity had to be found. This was achieved largely through the use of various nominal records, the address coinciding with the period of activity being used for mapping purposes. In some instances where

the evidence suggests the bonfire boy was living in his father's house this address was used.<sup>28</sup> Table 1 shows that of the 527 members, 87.5 per cent (n=461) can be ascribed addresses and of these 89.9 per cent (n=417) belonged to the four main societies, Borough, Cliffe, Commercial Square and Southover.

Once these three variables were determined addresses were plotted and the membership distribution correlated with society territory. Figs 9 to 14 illustrate graphically the extent of the correlation while Table 2 records this correlation numerically. As both show, a significant proportion of members' residences cluster within the territory circumscribed by the processional routes of their society. Among the four established societies, where numbers are large, only Commercial Square has a sizable minority not living in its territory. Territorial residence is particularly high in Southover where 85.9 per cent (n=55) of members were resident. Even 'Duals', members of more than one society, appear to conform, with over three quarters of them living in the territory of one of the societies to which they belonged.

#### ASPECTS OF NEIGHBOURING

However neighbourhood is more than a geographic location occupied by a particular group. Mann refers to two definitions of neighbourhood.<sup>29</sup> Firstly it is 'a distinct territorial group, distinct by virtue of the specific physical characteristics of the area and the specific social characteristics of the inhabitants' and secondly it is 'a territorial group, the members of which meet on common ground within their own area of primary social activities and for organized and spontaneous social contacts'. While defended neighbourhood emphasises geographic boundaries, the second definition emphasises the social characteristics of neighbourhood, the relationships between the residents. Parkin and König similarly emphasise this, Parkin arguing that neighbourhoods 'revolve around a hard core of fairly frequently

interacting tenants' while Konig notes that they are based primarily on informal, unorganised personal relationships.<sup>30</sup> Here it is being argued that the bonfire boys' activities expressed neighbourhood solidarity, but if their societies were symbolic representations of neighbourhood and expressions of community feeling it is

necessary to establish that social relationships within each neighbourhood existed throughout the year rather than in a vacuum one night of the year.

Stacey considers a number of factors influencing the amount and quality of neighbouring, including house type and layout,

TABLE 1  
Member's society and place of residence

<i>Society</i>	<i>Number of members</i>		<i>Addresses mapped</i>		<i>Difference</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Borough (BBS)	98	100.0	91	92.9	7	7.1
Cliffe (CBS)	94	100.0	85	90.4	9	9.6
Commercial (CSBS)	208	100.0	177	85.1	31	14.9
St Anne's (StABS)	13	100.0	13	100.0	—	—
Southover (SBS)	74	100.0	64	86.5	10	13.5
South Street (SSJBS)	9	100.0	4	44.4	5	55.6
Waterloo (WBS)	1	100.0	1	100.0	—	—
Duals	30	100.0	26	86.7	4	13.3
Totals	527	100.0	461	87.5	66	12.5

*Sources: Sussex Agricultural Express, Sussex Weekly Advertiser, 1881 Census, Lewes Trade and Street directories, Lewes Parochial and non-parochial registers, Registers of Electors for East Sussex and Lewes Divisions. For a full list of sources, see Etherington, 1987, 527–30.*

TABLE 2  
Society territory and membership distribution

<i>Society</i>	<i>Total identified addresses</i>		<i>Resident in territory</i>		<i>Not resident in territory</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
BBS	91	100.0	66	72.5	25	27.5
CBS	85	100.0	64	75.3	21	24.7
CSBS	177	100.0	114	64.4	63	35.6
StABS	13	100.0	11	84.6	2	15.4
SBS	64	100.0	55	85.9	9	14.1
SSJBS	4	100.0	3	75.0	1	25.0
WBS	1	100.0	1	100.0	—	—
Duals	26	100.0	20	76.9	6	23.1
Totals	461	100.0	334	72.5	127	27.5

*Sources: As for Table 1.*

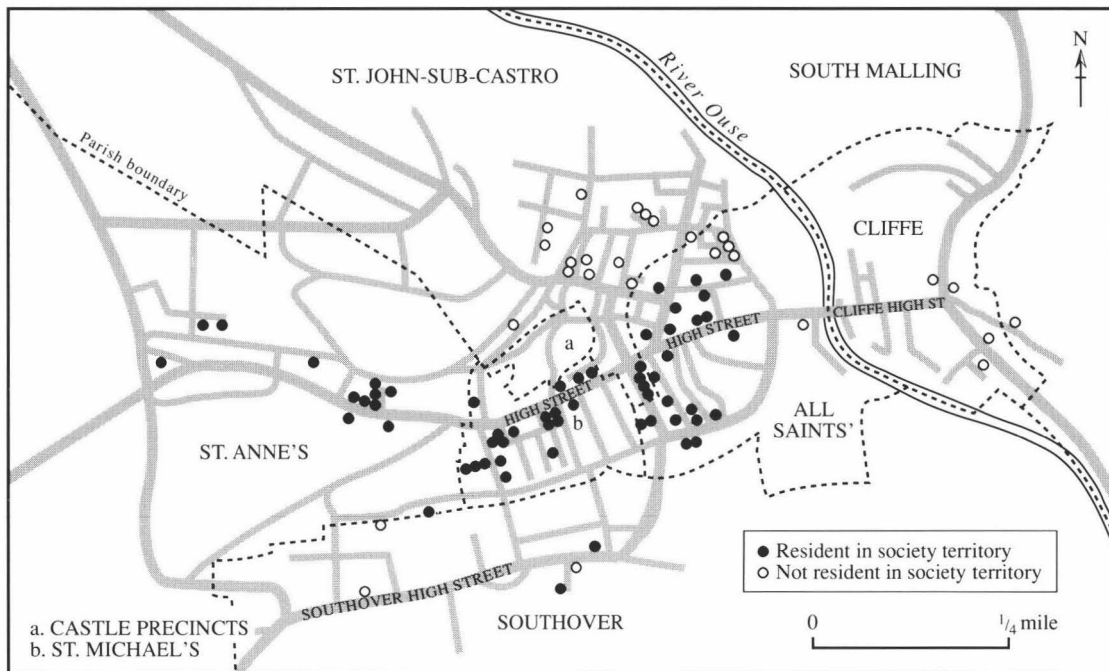


Fig. 9. Residential distribution of Borough Bonfire Society members.

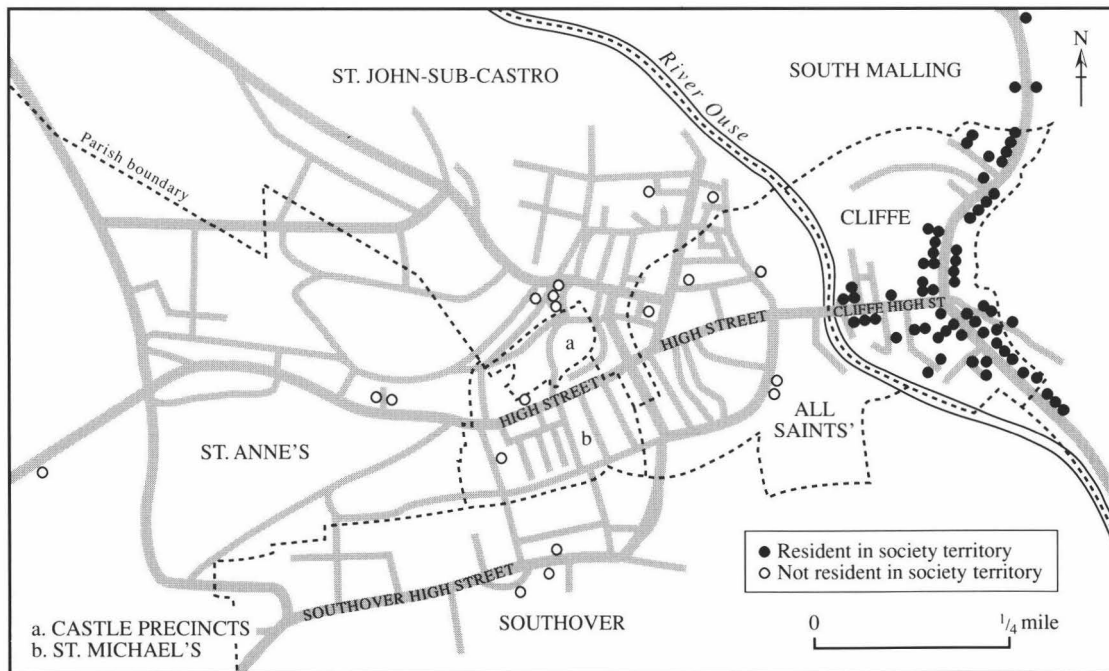


Fig. 10. Residential distribution of Cliffe Bonfire Society members.

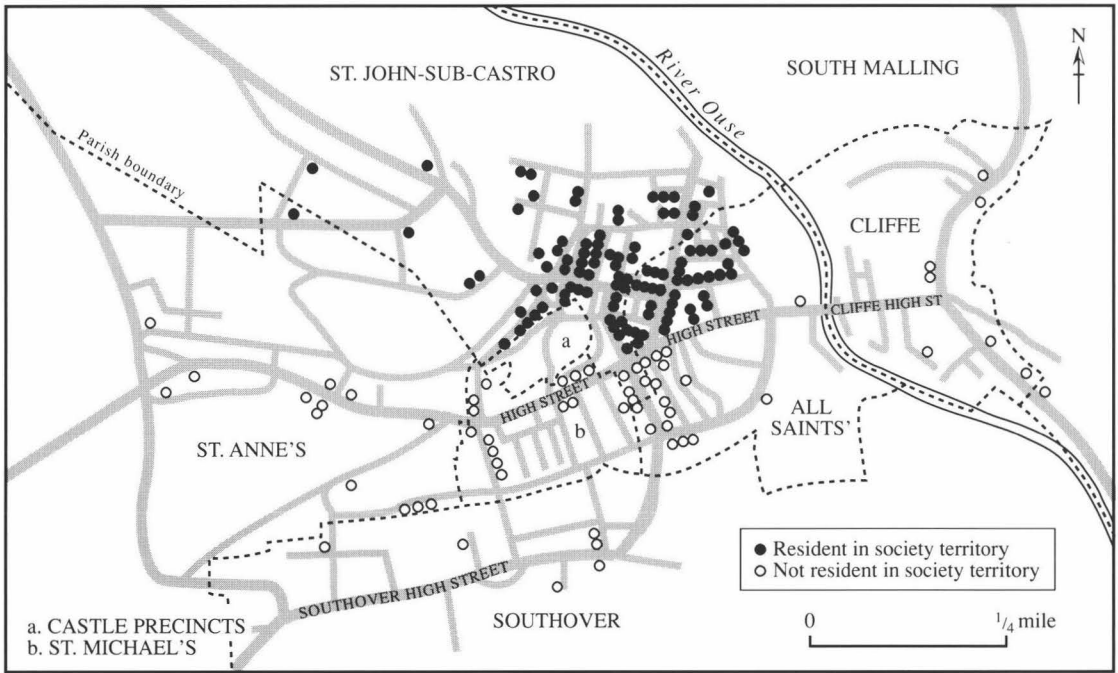


Fig. 11. Residential distribution of Commercial Square Bonfire Society members.

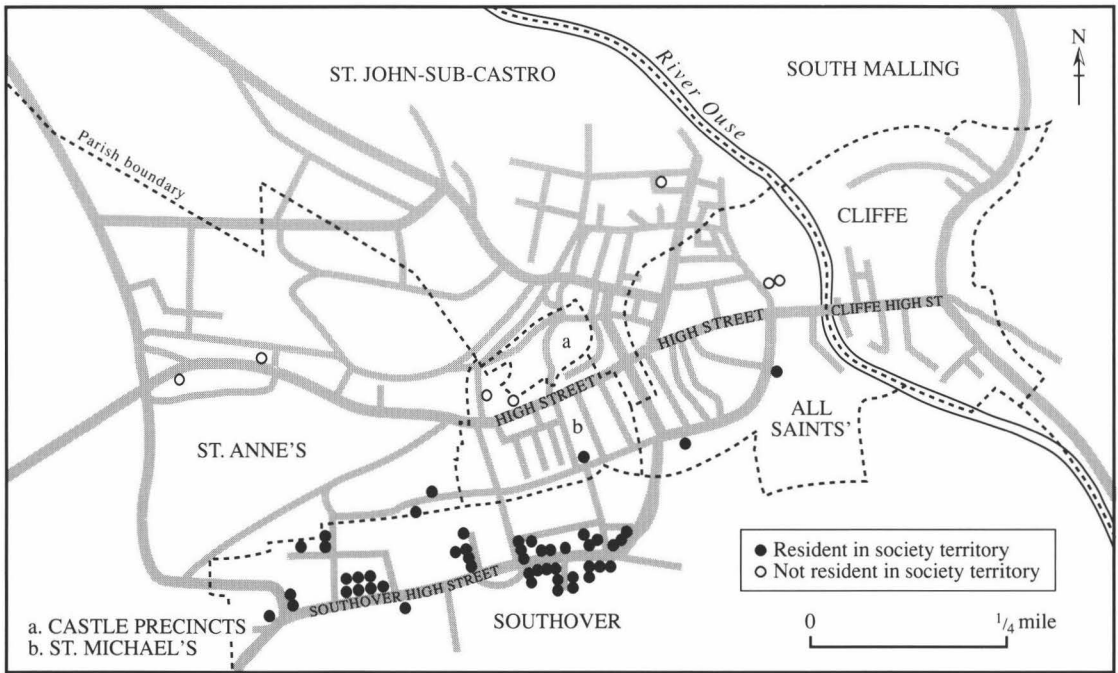


Fig. 12. Residential distribution of Southover Bonfire Society members.

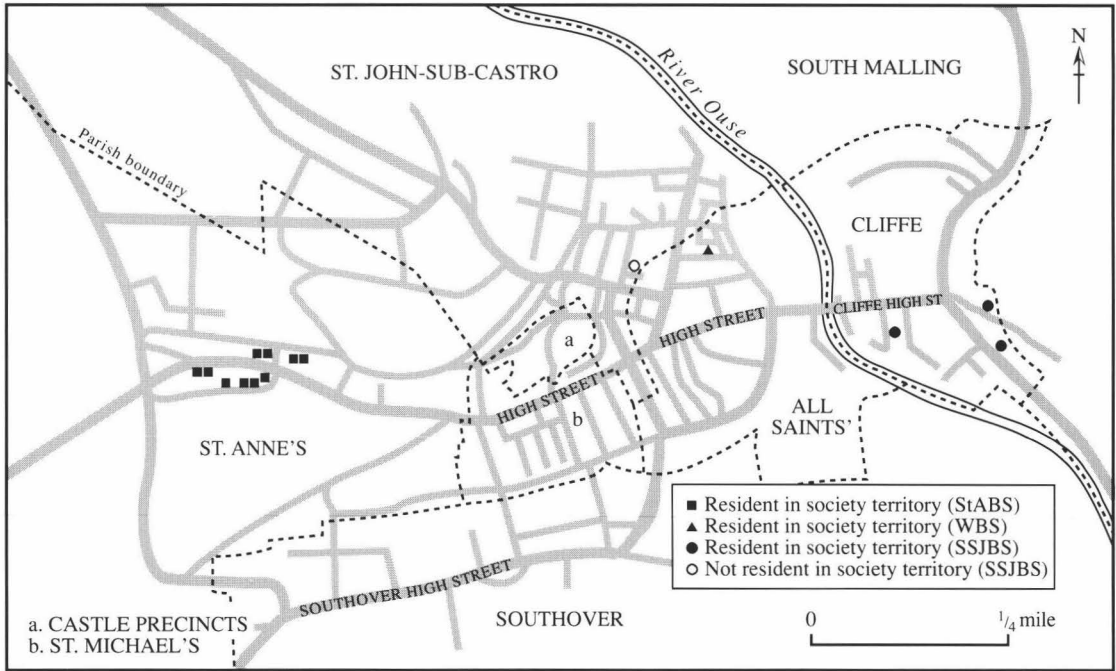


Fig. 13. Residential distribution of St. Anne's, Waterloo and South Street Juvenile Bonfire Society members.

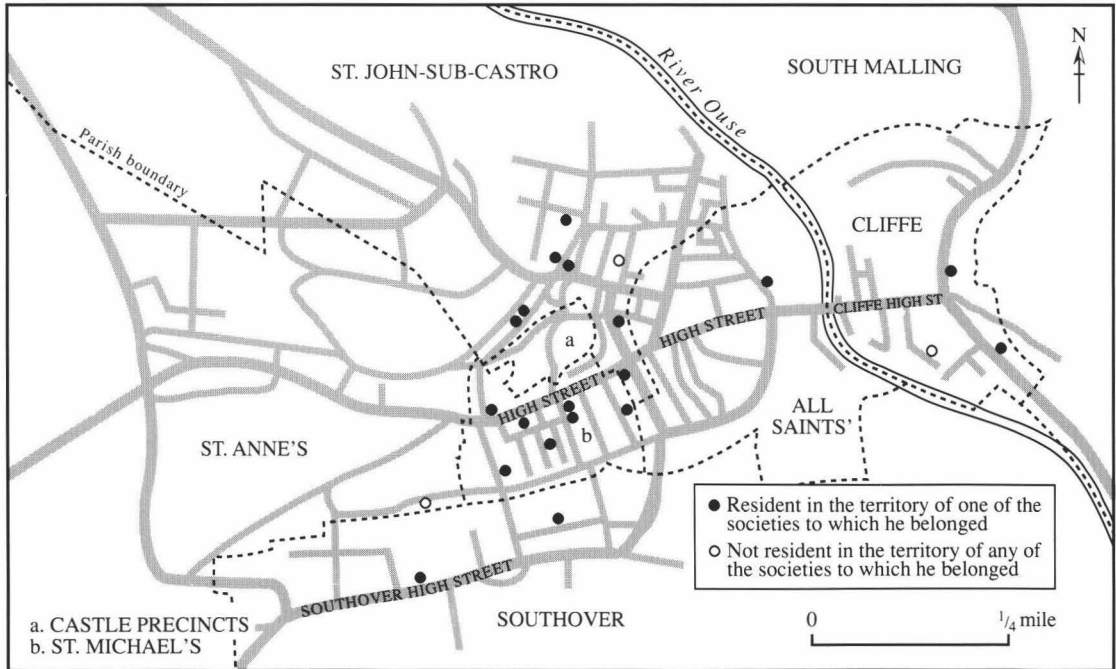


Fig. 14. Residential distribution of dual members.

age, children, place of origin, length of residence, kin, social class and status, friendship and associational life.<sup>31</sup> But in the historical context, due to the limitations of documentary sources, the existence of some, particularly those relating to social relationships, cannot easily be shown empirically. Evidence indicating the neighbourhood orientation of the bonfire

TABLE 3  
Place of birth of the bonfire boys

<i>Bonfire Boy Group</i>	<i>Place of Birth</i>								<i>Totals</i>	
	<i>Lewes</i>		<i>Sussex</i>		<i>Elsewhere</i>		<i>Unknown</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>		
Society member (Terr Res)	184	55.3	34	10.2	23	6.9	92	27.6	333	100.0
Society member (Non-Terr Res)	69	53.9	8	6.3	—	—	51	39.8	128	100.0
Society member (Res N/K)	21	31.8	4	6.1	4	6.1	37	56.1	66	100.0
Others	38	48.1	4	5.1	4	5.1	33	41.8	79	100.0
Supporters	13	34.2	—	—	10	26.3	15	39.5	38	100.0
Totals	325	50.5	50	7.8	41	6.4	228	35.4	644	100.0

*Abbreviations:* Terr Res (Territory resident), Non-Terr Res (Non-Territory resident) and Res N/K (Residence not known).

*Sources:* 1841–81 Census, Lewes parochial and non-parochial registers

TABLE 4  
Length of residency in society territory

<i>Society</i>	<i>Length of residency</i>								<i>Totals</i>	
	<i>Life Long</i>		<i>Moved into territory as adult</i>		<i>Moved into territory as child</i>		<i>Difficult to determine</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>		
BBS	29	44.6	30	46.1	2	3.1	4	6.2	65	100.0
CBS	36	56.2	22	34.4	1	1.6	5	7.8	64	100.0
CSBS	45	39.5	49	43.0	11	9.6	9	7.9	114	100.0
StABS	3	27.3	8	72.7	—	—	—	—	11	100.0
SSJBS	2	66.7	—	—	1	33.3	—	—	3	100.0
WBS	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	100.0	1	100.0
Duals	3	15.0	15	75.0	—	—	2	10.0	20	100.0
Totals	141	42.3	145	43.5	18	5.4	29	8.7	333	100.0

*Note:* The 333 members in the table are those who were living in their society territory.

*Sources:* 1841–81 Censuses, Lewes parochial and non-parochial registers, Lewes street and trade directories.



societies arising from their activities has been outlined. However, employing some of the factors isolated by Stacey, particularly social class, place of origin, kin, length of residence and associational life further evidence can be found which suggests the existence of neighbourhood living in a number of localities in Lewes.

In Lewes working class streets and neighbourhoods can be identified<sup>32</sup> and it is from these that some members were drawn. The cohesiveness of traditional working class areas has been commented upon and while such accounts have been criticised for their sentimental idealisation,<sup>33</sup> empirical evidence tends, at least in part, to confirm their existence. But the bonfire societies drew their membership not only from the working class, but also sections of the lower middle class.<sup>34</sup> However it is probable that as a consequence of regular unstructured social interaction resulting from propinquity fairly cohesive neighbourhoods existed that transcended class differences.<sup>35</sup>

Two factors encouraging the formation of informal social relationships are the period of residence in the area and the duration of membership of a society. Where long term residency existed as a consequence of either being born locally or having moved into an area at an early age, it may be assumed that many neighbourhood residents would have been interacting for some time resulting in social

networks being well established. Evidence indicates that many bonfire boys, including society members, others involved in some way with the celebrations and supporters, were born in Lewes. Table 3 shows that 325 individuals representing 78.1 per cent of the 416 bonfire boys for whom a place of birth is known were born in Lewes. This predominance of Lewes-born bonfire boys is largely accounted for by society members. Of these, 52.0 per cent ( $n=274$ ) were born in Lewes, 13.8 per cent ( $n=73$ ) were not, and the place of birth of the remaining 34.2 per cent ( $n=180$ ) is not known although it is likely that many of these were born in Lewes. Only the 'supporters' did not conform to this pattern, the proportion of those born in Lewes being much smaller. Supporters came from the town's business and professional strata and that many were not born in Lewes probably reflects the geographical mobility usually associated with the middle class.

The 'place of birth' recorded in census enumerators' books rarely gave sufficient information to establish whether individuals were born in the neighbourhoods in which they lived at the time of their society membership, but according to addresses recorded in the baptismal registers 42.3 per cent ( $n=141$ ) were born in their society's territory, as Table 4 shows. It was found that a much smaller, but no less significant, group of members were resident in their society's

TABLE 5  
Long-term society members

Society	Approximate length of involvement in years				Totals <i>n</i>	%
	10-14	15-19	20-24	25+		
BBS	7	1	1	1	10	10.2
CBS	9	1	3		13	13.8
CSBS	11	10	4	4	29	13.9
SBS	7	1	1		9	12.2
Dual	4	1	2		7	23.3
Totals	38	14	11	5	68	12.9

Sources: SAE and SWA.

territory since childhood. When these individuals are combined with those born in Lewes this group constitutes nearly half of society members. Although a degree of variation among the main societies exists the extent of correlation between locally born, long term residents and neighbourhood society supports the contention that members were identifying with their neighbourhood and expressed this through membership of their local bonfire society.

Length of society membership was also likely to contribute to a sense of continuity and belonging. Table 5 shows 68 members, representing 12.9 per cent of all society members, who were reported as active for periods exceeding ten years. Included among them are a number of society officers resident in their society's area who, as will be discussed later, were central figures in social networks arising from their membership of numerous voluntary associations. Borough member W. T. Gearing was active for 41 years, H. E. Philcox of Cliffe for 23 years, and the treasurer of Commercial Square, T. E. Gearing and the society's secretary, E. L. Tappin for 26 and 20 years respectively. Their presence among the long-term members indicates their importance as key members, both in the offices they held and as anchorage points within their respective social networks.

It is not enough, however, to define neighbourhoods as geographical entities with residents sharing frequent contact, place of birth and lengthy periods of residency. If people were exhibiting a community spirit through their membership of bonfire societies a second dimension that attributes neighbourhood with high density social networks arising from kin, friendship and neighbouring links must be established. It is necessary to show that neighbourhood has a social as well as a geographic meaning, arising from a web of relationships between the people who live there.

Establishing the existence of social relationships through social network analysis using historical data however presents specific

difficulties. Social networks have two characteristics, the structural, which maps links between people, and the interactional, which takes account of the content of the relationships. In the contemporary situation people can be asked with whom they are in contact and the interactional qualities of the relationships within their network. But in the historical context, while it is possible to show that fairly extensive networks existed among society members the content, directedness, durability, intensity and frequency of the links can only be deduced from the structural characteristics of these networks.<sup>36</sup> It is not possible to be certain about the meaning or purpose brought to the relationships by those involved. Thus, while structural links between groups of bonfire boys can be made the qualitative character of these relationships remain elusive, if not impossible to determine. However, while these difficulties remain, network analysis does provide insights not only into the bonfire societies' neighbourhood orientation, but also the bonfire boys as a total group.

#### FAMILY NETWORKS AMONG THE BONFIRE BOYS

Two sources establish the existence of networks that indicate society members interacted on a regular basis within their society neighbourhoods. Firstly, there is evidence of kin living in the territory of the society to which they belonged. Secondly, data recording the bonfire boys' membership of other voluntary associations within the locality establishes the existence of neighbourhood social networks. Further evidence showing extensive membership of other voluntary associations by the bonfire boys indicates the existence of networks that extended beyond society and neighbourhood to embrace fellow bonfire boys in other societies and neighbourhoods. This evidence of extensive membership of other voluntary association suggests social bonds existed not only within neighbourhoods and between members of the same society, but also among the bonfire boys as

a total group.

Newspaper reports suggest that family involvement was an important factor during the 19th century, the celebrations promoting 'a happy reunion between scattered members of Lewes families' when 'young men and women who rarely visit their native place come to their old homes'.<sup>37</sup> Extensive kinship networks embracing both nuclear and extended family members and spanning inter-generational membership within each of the societies were found in a survey of contemporary bonfire boys in 1974.<sup>38</sup> Historical sources do not provide the same comprehensive data available for the 1974 Survey, but the links that were established are tabulated in Table 6. The 121 members recorded represent 24.3 per cent of all society members. Where family relationships are established nearly all exist within the parameters of close male kin, father, sons and brothers. The majority of these links however consist of only two or three individuals. Of the 52 family groups identified 73.1 per cent (n=38) include two members of the same family, 21.1 per cent (n=11) three, and only 5.8 per cent (n=3) four.

The wider family connections found in the 1974 Survey do not appear to have been present

in the 19th century, although limitations in the available data may be affecting this. It can be argued that Table 6 does not reflect the full extent of family membership due to the participation of identified women and children going unrecorded in the press and thus not figuring in the present data. Additionally, more extensive family connections may be tentatively made if those bonfire boys who were not 'historically individuated' through nominal record linkage are taken into account. A further 224 named members representing 67.7 per cent of those not positively identified either shared common surnames with those historically individuated or with others not positively identified. Among this group many less common surnames occurring in single societies suggests the probability of family relationships in addition to those already found.<sup>39</sup>

The importance of family influencing membership is supported by the period of activity of related individuals tending to coincide. The extent of this is indicated in Table 7. In these cases involvement of one family member probably encouraged the participation of other close male relatives, but such a conclusion must remain tentative in view of the

TABLE 6  
Family links within each society

Society	<i>Positively identified relationships</i>							
	<i>Father/son</i>		<i>Brothers</i>		<i>Others</i>		<i>Totals</i>	
	<i>NI(a)</i>	<i>NR(b)</i>	<i>NI</i>	<i>NR</i>	<i>NI</i>	<i>NR</i>	<i>NI</i>	<i>NR</i>
BBS	11	5	13	6	2	1	26	12
CBS	19(c)	7	8	4	—	—	27	11
CSBS	24	10	19	8	—	—	43	18
StABS	2	1	2	1	—	—	4	2
SBS	13	6	8	3	—	—	21	9
Totals	69	29	50	22	2	1	121	52
%	57.8	55.8	41.3	42.3	1.7	1.9	100.0	100.0

Notes: a. NI = Number of individuals; b. NR = Number of relationships; c. This total includes a father/son/father's brother relationship (i.e. three individuals).

Sources: As for Table 3.

fact that 75.7 per cent (n = 376) had no identified relative involved.

Further data emphasising the influence of family membership is the apparent loyalty of family members to one society. Table 6 indicates that family relationships within societies existed

among 24.3 per cent (n = 121) of society members while Table 8 shows that only in a few instances did these families divide their loyalties between more than one society. Forty-seven individuals were connected through 18 family relationships that divided across societies. Of these, 28 are

TABLE 7  
Family links within and between societies and period of activity

Period of activity	Relationship Father/son		Brother		Other		Totals	
	NR	NI	NR	NI	NR	NI	NR	NI
Same period of activity	23	53	18	45	—	—	41 (68.3%)	98 (65.8%)
Different period of activity	8	17	3	6	—	—	11 (18.3%)	23 (15.4%)
Spanning both periods (a)	2	7	5	18	1	3	8 (13.3%)	28 (18.8%)
Totals	33	77	26	69	1	3	60 (100%)	149 (100%) (b)

Notes: a. Included here are relationships that involve some members active during the same period, but others who were not; e.g. the brothers H.T., W.N. and A. Barnard were all active between 1889 and 1895, but a fourth brother, G.T., was not active until 1901. b. These totals relate to 52 relationships (NI = 121) within societies (see Table 6) and eight additional relationships (NI = 28) identified as existing between societies.

Sources: SAE, SWA, 1841–81 Census, Lewes parochial and non-parochial registers.

TABLE 8  
Positive family links across societies

Society	Relationship Father/son		Brother		Others		Totals	
	NI	NR	NI	NR	NI	NR	NI	NR
CSBS/BBS	11	4	2	1	—	—	13	5
CSBS/CBS	2	1	—	—	—	—	2	1
BBB/SBS	5	2	—	—	—	—	5	2
BBS/CBS	2	1	5	2	—	—	7	3
SBS/CBS	—	—	4	1	—	—	4	1
CSBS/SBS	2	1	2	1	—	—	4	2
3/4 Socs (a)	4	2	4	1	4	1	12	4
Totals	26	11	17	6	4	1	47	18

Notes: a. Including 'Duals'.

Sources: As for Table 3.

recorded for the first time, the others already sharing relationships within single societies. The newly recorded individuals included in Table 8 are either related to one of the families in Table 6 or form new family relationships not contained within a single society, for example W. T. and F. H. Gearing, both Borough members, were a

father-son relationship, but a brother, T. E. Gearing, belonged to Commercial Square. Thus from a total of 149 society members with relatives only 18.9 per cent ( $n = 28$ ) had relatives in another society.

Finally, having established family connections within societies, family networks

TABLE 9  
Family links existing within territory

Society	Family living in society territory		Family not living in society territory		Family divided between territory and non-territory		Totals	
	NI	NR	NI	NR	NI	NR	NI	NR
BBS	17	8	9	2	2	1	28	11
CBS	11	4	8	3	6	3	25	10
CSBS	39	17	2	1	2	1	43	19
StABS	2	1	—	—	—	—	2	1
SBS	21	9	—	—	—	—	21	9
Totals	n 90	39	19	6	10	5	119	50
	% 75.6	78.0	16.0	12.0	8.4	10.0	100.0	100.0

*Note:* Included among the family groups in this table are two where another family member lives outside the society's territory and four where other family members belong to a different society.

*Sources:* 1861–81 Census, Lewes trade and street directories, Registers of Electors for East Sussex and Lewes Divisions.

TABLE 10  
Bonfire Boys' membership of voluntary associations

Society	Number of Voluntary Associations belonged to										Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
BBS	16	13	7	7	3		4	1		2	53
CBS	16	10	9	2		1	1	1			40
CSBS	39	28	16	13	10	4	9	7	1	3	130
StABS	3	2	1	1							7
SBS	18	7	7	4	3		1			1	41
Duals	2	8	2	3	1	2			1	3	22
Others	9	4	2	2	1						18
Supps	8	2	5	2	1	1				5	23
Totals	111	74	49	34	19	8	15	9	2	14	334

*Sources:* SAE and SWA.

may now be related to society territory. Although families are found among only a quarter of society members the majority of these families lived in their society's territory, as Table 9 shows. But while this data suggests that family networks, neighbourhood living and society membership do coincide, because the 90 individual family members represent only 18.1 per cent of the 497 society members any conclusion must remain tentative.

#### SOCIAL NETWORKS, VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIETY MEMBERS

During the late 1880s reporting style in the local newspapers changed, the activities of local voluntary associations and the names of those involved being extensively documented. This provides considerably more data which, when linked with the known bonfire boys, indicates an extensive membership of other Lewes voluntary associations. Allowing for the difficulty of being able to link according to only surname and first name initial, it is found that 51.7 per cent ( $n=334$ ) were involved in 65 various voluntary associations during the years 1890 to 1913.

The potential for the existence of extensive networks among the bonfire boys resulting from this is shown in Table 10. Of these 66.8 per cent ( $n=223$ ) belonged to two or more other associations, the remaining one-third being members of only one. However, many of these belonged in the company of fellow society members. But while the majority of family networks exist within society territory the same is not true of the social networks found among voluntary associations. There were neighbourhood orientated associations, particularly those based on parish churches or local pubs, but many were not attracting members exclusively from within that neighbourhood.

While the bonfire societies had their headquarters in neighbourhood pubs and held many of their social events in them,<sup>40</sup> a significant number of members did not belong to

other neighbourhood associations, as Table 11 shows. Only among Southover members was there a tendency to belong to neighbourhood clubs, the 48 members belonging to local clubs representing 64.9 per cent of the total identified Southover membership. From among the total identified memberships of the other societies only 22.7 per cent, 6.4 per cent, 6.3 per cent and 7.7 per cent of Borough, Cliffe, Commercial Square and St Anne's respectively belonged to associations located in their societies' territories. The only association with a significant number of members, the St Michael's Social Club, attracted bonfire boys from all five societies, the majority coming from Borough and Commercial Square, the town centre societies.

Obviously it was the activity being offered that attracted members to these other voluntary associations rather than their neighbourhood orientation, but there is considerable data indicating a correlation between membership and membership of 'interest' associations. As a result a significant number of bonfire boys belonged to extensive social networks involving fellow society members. This is likely to have reinforced those kin and friendship networks already existing within the neighbourhoods. The 264 members included in Table 12 represent 55.7 per cent of all members from the four large societies. The extent of linkages between these members is indicated by the fact that, apart from Southover, over 50 per cent of members from the other societies were linked more than ten times to other members within their society. In the case of the Commercial Square Society the network among the members belonging to other voluntary associations was extensive, with only 6.9 per cent ( $n=9$ ) linked to other members less than ten times.

No statistical analysis of these linkages has been carried out, but a number of society members may be taken to illustrate the extent of some individual personal networks resulting from voluntary associations membership. T. E. Gearing was linked to 93 fellow Commercial Square members through his membership of ten



TABLE 11  
Voluntary Association, Society and Society Territory

<i>Voluntary Association in Society Territory</i>	<i>Society</i>					<i>Total</i>	
	<i>BBS</i>	<i>CBS</i>	<i>CSBS</i>	<i>ABS</i>	<i>SBS</i>		
<i>Borough Territory</i>							
Crown Shades S.C.	–	1	1	–	–	2	
Jolly Anglers S.C.	–	–	1	–	1	2	
Lansdown Arms S.C.	–	–	1	–	–	1	
Rainbow S.C.	2	–	2	–	–	4	
Royal Oak S.C.	–	–	2	–	–	2	
St Michael's C.C.	4	2	11	1	1	19	
St Michael's Soc. C.	10	2	26	1	2	41	
Sussex Arms S.C.	1	–	–	–	–	1	
Unicorn S.C.	1	–	1	–	2	4	
Volunteer S.C.	1	–	1	–	2	4	
Totals	n	19	5	46	2	8	80
	%	23.7	6.3	57.5	2.5	10.0	100.0
<i>Cliffe Territory</i>							
Cliffe Soc. C.	6	5	7	–	–	18	
Thatched House Q.C.	–	1	–	–	–	1	
Totals	n	6	6	7	–	–	19
	%	31.6	31.6	36.8	–	–	100.0
<i>Commercial Territory</i>							
All Saints Men's Guild	1	–	3	–	–	4	
All Saints Soc. C.	2	1	5	–	2	10	
Elephant & Castle S.C.	–	1	5	–	–	6	
Totals	n	3	2	13	–	2	20
	%	15.0	10.0	65.0	–	10.0	100.0
<i>St Anne's Territory</i>							
St Anne's Soc. C.	1	3	3	1	3	11	
Windmill Q.C.	1	1	1	–	–	3	
Windmill S.C.	–	2	–	–	–	2	
Totals	n	2	6	4	1	3	16
	%	12.5	37.5	25.0	6.2	18.8	100.0
<i>Southover Territory</i>							
King's Head C.C.	–	–	1	–	5	6	
King's Head S.C.	–	1	1	–	10	12	
King's Head T.C.	1	–	–	–	4	5	
Priory Arms Ton. C.	–	–	–	–	4	4	
Priory C.C.	–	–	–	–	1	1	
Southover Bellringers	–	–	–	–	2	2	
Southover Churchmen	1	–	–	–	8	9	
Southover Court Baron	1	1	4	–	2	8	
Southover C.C.	1	–	1	–	9	11	
Southover Friendly Soc.	–	1	2	–	–	3	
Southover Star F.C.	–	1	1	–	1	3	
Southover Ton. C.	–	–	–	–	2	2	
Totals	n	4	4	10	–	48	66
	%	6.1	6.1	15.1	–	72.7	100.0

*Abbreviations:* C.C. (Cricket Club), F.C. (Football Club), Q.C. (Quoit Club), S.C. (Slate Club), Soc. C. (Social Club), Ton. C. (Tontine Club).

*Sources:* SAE and SWA.

voluntary associations. He was linked to 49 fellow members once, 19 twice, 15 three times, 6 four times, 3 five times and 1 seven times. Similarly C. W. Gardner belonged to eight voluntary associations and through these was linked to 90 Commercial Square members. He was linked to 39 once, 24 twice, 14 three times, 7 four times, 4 five times and 1 six times. Other Commercial Square members had extensive links including E. T. Clare, E. E. Foster, P. W. King, H. Mercer, S. L. Wright, W. J. Tapp and E. L. Tappin, all of whom were individually linked to over 70 other members. Similar multiple linkages were less common among the other societies, this is in some part attributable to the smaller numbers involved, but those who did included W. T. Gearing and T. Buckman of Borough, H. Holman, H. E. Philcox, G. Watford and C. S. Wood from Cliffe, and J. R. Lusted and G. Stroud, both Southover members.

In instances where a bonfire boy belonged to only one or two voluntary associations he still came into contact with other society members. The Borough member, H. Pinyoun, belonged only to the Liberal Association, but through this he was linked to five fellow society members who were also Liberal Association members. Similarly Minshal Baxter belonged to the South

Saxon Lodge of Freemasons, but shared this membership with three other society members.

Evidence suggests that key groups within each society formed a nucleus of members sustaining fairly regular social interaction. Two examples may be used to illustrate this. Table 13 shows the linkages between 14 Borough members, all linked to at least 20 fellow members. Besides establishing links between these members the Table also shows the degree of frequency with which contact was made. Buckman, W. T. Gearing, Lenny and Whiteman, are central figures of the network, being linked to all thirteen other members, in many instances at least three times. They were themselves linked to each other between four and six times, only Lenny and Whiteman not coming into frequent contact.

A more extensive network existed among Commercial Square members. Of 130 members belonging to other voluntary associations only 5.4 per cent ( $n=7$ ) were linked to less than ten fellow society members. Many were linked to large numbers, the twenty members in Table 14 being in contact with at least 70 other fellow society members. The existence of such a group is itself significant, indicating the extent of linkages within the Commercial Square Society, in some

TABLE 12  
Number of members within each society linked through membership of voluntary associations

Society	Number of linked individuals										Totals
	0-9	10-9	20-9	30-9	40-9	50-9	60-9	70-9	80-9	90-9	
BBS	n 22	19	9	3							53
	% 41.5	35.8	17.0	5.7							100.0
CBS	n 19	17	4								40
	% 47.5	42.5	10.0								100.0
CSBS	n 9	23	22	14	14	12	16	11	6	3	130
	% 6.9	17.7	16.9	10.8	10.8	9.2	12.3	8.5	4.6	2.3	100.0
SBS	n 31	8	2								41
	% 75.6	19.5	4.9								100.0
Total	n 81	67	37	17	14	12	16	11	6	3	264
	% 30.7	25.4	14.0	6.4	5.3	4.5	6.1	4.2	2.3	1.1	100.0

Sources: SAE and SWA.

TABLE 13  
Links between key Borough members

Name													Number of contacts	
Gearing W. T.	X													13
Lenny G. J.	6	X												13
Buckman T.	5	4	X											13
Whiteman C. L.	4	1	4	X										13
Banks W.	3	2	2	3	X									13
Gearing F. H.	3	1	2	2	2	X								12
Banks A.	3	2	1	2	3	1	X							12
Baxter W. D.	3	4	1	2	1	1	1	X						9
Broad V.	2	3	2	1	1	1	-	1	X					9
Philcox E.	2	2	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	X				9
Arter H.	3	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	2	1	X			9
Gower H.	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	1	1	1	X		11
James A. E.	1	1	2	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	1	1	X	10
Card E. A.	2	3	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	X	7
Name (a)	G	L	B	W	B	G	B	B	B	P	A	G	J	C

Note: a. Initial letter of surname in same order as column.

Sources: SAE and SWA.

TABLE 14  
Links between 20 Commercial Square members

Name																	Number of contacts				
Wright S. L.	X																19				
Gardner C. W.	6	X															19				
Gearing T. E.	7	4	X														19				
Hardwick J. R.	7	5	5	X													19				
Wells H. H.	5	3	5	3	X												19				
Mercer H.	4	5	4	5	3	X											19				
King P. W.	4	5	3	3	2	5	X										19				
Philcox S. J.	5	5	4	3	3	2	3	X									19				
Taylor F.	5	4	5	3	3	2	-	5	X								18				
Parker G. E.	3	4	3	2	4	1	3	4	4	X							19				
Foster E. E.	6	3	4	2	5	3	3	2	3	3	X						19				
Uridge A. J. R.	3	3	4	2	4	2	3	2	2	4	3	X					19				
Higham T.	5	4	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	1	X				19				
Clare E. T.	3	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	X			19				
Fenton J.	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	2	2	2	1	X		19				
Tapp W. J.	2	3	3	3	1	2	3	2	3	2	-	2	3	3	3	X	18				
Stevenson S. J.	2	2	3	2	5	2	2	1	1	4	3	3	1	2	1	1	X	19			
Diplock A. L.	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	1	X	19		
Tappin E. L.	2	4	1	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	X	19	
Barnard A.	1	3	2	3	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	X	19
Name (a)	W	G	G	H	W	M	K	P	T	P	F	U	H	C	F	T	S	D	T	B	

Note: a. Initial letter of surname in same order as column.

Sources: SAE and SWA.

instances members being linked as many as six or seven times to fellow members. Only two pairs of possible links were not made, those between Tapp and Foster, and Taylor and King. Unlike among Borough members no cluster emerged to form a core group. Rather links are spread evenly among the group.

Multiple links existed between some individuals, but while others were not involved in such close knit networks multiple links between them and other members exist. For example, Stevenson is linked five times to Wells and four times to Parker. Many of these multiple linkages occur when groups of society members belonged to particular voluntary associations. Membership was spread over a large number of voluntary associations but between one and five belonged to each while as many as 13 Borough members belonged to the Rifle Volunteers and the Lewes Cycle Club included 38 Commercial Square members.

These networks and others that probably existed among members of the other societies would have performed an integrative function, as discussed by Litwak and Ross, in a similar way that neighbourhood relationships did.<sup>41</sup> Members of family networks and those society members sharing common membership of other voluntary associations are likely to have come into frequent contact, thus sustaining relationships throughout the year and not just during the short period of bonfire activity around the 5th November.

#### THE BONFIRE BOYS AS A TOTAL GROUP

So far voluntary association membership in relation to individual societies has been discussed. However many voluntary associations were not the exclusive domain of members from one bonfire society. Most of the 65 voluntary associations included among their membership bonfire boys from different societies including five with over 50, many coming from the three large societies, Borough, Cliffe and Commercial Square. Extensive networks involving members

from all the societies existed among those who were members of these five associations. Such extensive networks spreading over a number of voluntary associations would suggest that in addition to coming into contact with bonfire boys and supporters from other bonfire societies it is probable that contact was frequent.

This leads onto the qualitative dimensions of social networks. If frequency of contact is high then the relationships between those involved are likely to be well-established and as a consequence they become a cohesive group identifying with each other through their common interest including the celebrations. Through networks that extend beyond the neighbourhood orientation of families and individual societies, members become involved in a wider fraternity of bonfire boys, identifying with each other as a total group. That the bonfire boys perceived themselves as a group that went beyond their individual societies was exhibited on various occasions, while promoting their societies, at times of adversity and during the defence of their celebrations. The spirit of friendship, co-operation and mutual self-interest present among the societies, it may be argued, were sustained and strengthened by the social networks existing among the bonfire boys both within and between the societies.

This sense of common identity and mutual interdependence was manifest in a number of ways. It was the practice of the societies to arrange the times of their 'Grand' processions to allow each society to receive the support of the others, thus enabling each society to put on a large and impressive procession. It was also customary for the leading members of each society to attend the annual dinners of the other societies, frequently being called upon to propose or respond to the toast to the 'Kindred Societies'. Less regularly, but no less significant, the societies came together to organise processions and firework displays for major civic and royal occasions including weddings, jubilees and coronations.<sup>42</sup>

Common cause was also made at times of

adversity. Mutual support was given to members who suffered injury or bereavement. On various occasions financial aid was organised to assist individual members. In 1906 and 1911 funds were set up to meet the expense of lawyers employed to defend bonfire boys arrested during the celebrations.<sup>43</sup> During the 1909 celebrations Tom Gearing, a Commercial Square torchman, died as a result of being badly burnt while distributing paraffin soaked torches. A subscription list was set up to help his wife and children, and by March, 1910 £183 3s. 10d. had been contributed including over £6 raised at a Cliffe Society concert the previous December.<sup>44</sup> In 1913 the Cliffe held a 'smoker' to raise money for a member who had broken his leg.<sup>45</sup>

More importantly for the societies was their ability to mount joint action when opposition threatened their celebrations. This was particularly in evidence between 1904 and 1906

when they had to defend their celebrations following the Dusart's fire.<sup>46</sup> Boissevain defines a 'clique' as a 'coalition whose members associate regularly with each other on the basis of affection and common interest and possesses a marked sense of common identity'.<sup>47</sup> The societies' speedy response and the co-operative spirit in which their concerted action was mounted may largely be attributable to the formation of such cliques of leading bonfire boys arising from the pre-existing web of social networks among members from the different bonfire societies.

The precise dynamics of clique formation are difficult to ascertain, but as Tables 15 and 16 show, 18 leading members from the four societies were linked in a multiplex network resulting from their membership of 11 voluntary associations. It was an alliance between such networks that undoubtedly led to the coalition of

TABLE 15  
Voluntary associations and leading members, 1904–1906

<i>Name and society</i>	<i>Voluntary Association</i>										
	<i>F</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>O</i>
Gearing W. T. (BBS)	X			X	X			X		X	X
Lusted J. R. (SBS)	X			X		X	X			X	
Hillman J. (SBS)	X	X	X						X		
Tappin E. L. (CSBS)	X	X	X		X						
King P. W. (CSBS)			X	X	X	X					
Gearing F. H. (BBS)		X						X		X	
Flint E. (CSBS)		X			X			X			
Stevenson S. J. (CSBS)			X		X			X			
Fenton J. (CSBS)	X	X				X					
Baker G. T. (BBS)							X		X		
Briggs J. W. (CBS)	X						X				
Peel G. W. (SBS)			X	X							
Reeves B. (BBS)					X						X
Errey C. (SBS)							X				
Hillman E. (SBS)									X		
Kemp C. W. (CBS)	X										
Muzzell T. (SBS)						X					
Glandfield J. T. (SBS)											X

*Abbreviations:* F. Foresters, V. Victoria Cycle Club, L. Lewes Cycle Club, C. Conservative Association, R. Rowing Club, D. Antedeluvian Order of Druids, S. Ancient Order of Shepherds, I. Rifle Volunteers, A. Artillery Volunteers, B. Ancient Order of Buffalo, O. Loyal Orange Lodge.

*Source:* SAE and SWA.

bonfire societies in 1904, interaction between their members bridging the separate identities of the societies. However, in the context of the present discussion it is necessary to note that during this period of mobilisation the two levels of networks described, those within and those between the societies, came into play. Craven and Wellman comment on how neighbourhood networks may utilise their wider networks, calling on like-minded people in other neighbourhoods to enter into an alliance to achieve a common objective.<sup>48</sup> In this way networks embracing both neighbourhood and voluntary association members were of considerable importance in providing the solidarity among the bonfire boys necessary to counter opposition.

## CONCLUSION

Too often attempts are made to understand the significance of a recurring celebration with

reference only to its intrinsic rituals and outward form. In the case of the Lewes Guy Fawkes Celebrations allusions to pagan origins or religious antagonism are frequently cited as explanations for their occurrence and survival. However the contention of this paper is that the social dimension, the interaction between people within acknowledged neighbourhoods and their sense of identity and social solidarity, provides an underlying motivation for maintaining the celebration. While it is not possible, with the historical sources available, to reconstruct either quantitatively or qualitatively the full extent of social interaction, sufficient evidence has been gathered which, when interpreted sociologically, indicates that the activities of the bonfire societies manifest a strong neighbourhood orientation reflecting and sustained by an intricate and extensive web of social relationships arising from kin, propinquity and voluntary association membership. By seeking an alternative explanation for the occurrence of

TABLE 16  
Connectivity among leading members, 1904–1906

Names and society	Names															No.			
	G	L	H	T	K	G	F	S	F	B	B	P	R	E	H		K	M	G
Gearing W. T. (BBS)	X																		12
Lusted J. R. (SBS)	3	X																	11
Hillman J. (SBS)	1	-	X																12
Tappin E. L. (CSBS)	1	2	2	X															10
King P. W. (CSBS)	2	2	1	3	X														10
Gearing F. H. (BBS)	2	1	1	1	-	X													7
Flint E. (CSBS)	2	-	1	1	1	2	X												8
Stevenson S. J. (CSBS)	2	-	1	1	1	1	2	X											8
Fenton J. (CSBS)	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	-	X										10
Baker G. T. (BBS)	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	X									5
Briggs J. W. (CBS)	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	X								7
Peel G. W. (SBS)	-	1	1	2	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	X							5
Reeves B. (BBS)	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	X						5
Errey C. (SBS)	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	X					3
Hillman E. (SBS)	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	X				2
Kemp C. W. (CBS)	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	X			5
Muzzell T. (SBS)	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X		4
Glandfield J. T. (SBS)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	X	2

*Abbreviations:* Top Row: Initial of surname appears in same order as left hand column. No. column indicates the number of other members to whom the individual is linked.

*Sources:* SAE and SWA.



the annual Lewes Guy Fawkes Night celebration it has been shown that recurrent ceremonial events can provide an opportunity to analyse the dynamic of community living in the past.

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#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> M. Gluckman, *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (1963); V. W. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (1957) Manchester; R. Frankenberg, *Village on the Border* (1957); B. Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England, 1700–1880* (1982), 149; R. D. Storch, *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (1982), 2.
- <sup>2</sup> R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreation in English Society, 1760–1918* (1973) Cambridge, 52–3.
- <sup>3</sup> J. Bernard, *The Sociology of Community* (1973) Glenview; D. W. Minar and S. Greer, *The Concept of Community: Readings with Interpretations* (1969) Chicago; C. Bell and H. Newby, *Community Studies* (1971).
- <sup>4</sup> F. Tonnies, *Community and Society* (1957) New York.
- <sup>5</sup> M. Stacey, 'Myth of Community Studies', *British Journal of Sociology* **20** (1969), 134–47; M. R. Stein, *The Eclipse of Community* (1972) New Jersey.
- <sup>6</sup> For more detail see J. E. Etherington, 'The Sociology of a Recurrent Ceremonial Drama: Lewes Guy Fawkes Night, 1800–1913' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, The Open Univ, 1987), 447.
- <sup>7</sup> For more details see J. E. Etherington, Ph.D. (1987), 447–8.
- <sup>8</sup> W. J. Goode, 'Community within a Community: The Professions', *American Sociological Review* **22** (2) (1957), 194–200.
- <sup>9</sup> *Sussex Agricultural Express* (Hereafter *SAE*), 8 November 1859.
- <sup>10</sup> *SAE*, 8 November 1870.
- <sup>11</sup> *SAE*, 9 November 1872.
- <sup>12</sup> *SAE*, 9 November 1878.
- <sup>13</sup> *East Sussex News*, 11 November 1892.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with W. R. Allen, 1976. Mr Allen was born in February 1900 and lived in Lewes all his life.
- <sup>15</sup> D. J. Parkin, *Neighbours and Nationals in an African City Ward* (1969) Berkeley, 68; P. H. Mann, *An Approach to Urban Sociology* (1965), 164; R. Konig, *The Community* (1968), 165.
- <sup>16</sup> *SAE*, 8 November 1879.
- <sup>17</sup> *SAE*, 8 November 1884.
- <sup>18</sup> *SAE*, 7 November 1857 and 8 November 1858.
- <sup>19</sup> The 1871 programme of the 'Rising Generation of Borough Bonfire Boys', Lewes Area Library.
- <sup>20</sup> G. D. Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (1972) Chicago, 171.
- <sup>21</sup> *SAE*, 7 November 1871 and 6 November 1897.
- <sup>22</sup> *SAE*, 5 November 1895.
- <sup>23</sup> *SAE*, 8 November 1884.
- <sup>24</sup> *SAE*, 8 November 1870.
- <sup>25</sup> *SAE*, 9 November 1886.
- <sup>26</sup> *SAE*, 9 July 1909.
- <sup>27</sup> For a full discussion of the technique of nominal record linkage see E. A. Wrigley, (ed.), *Identifying People in the Past* (1973).
- <sup>28</sup> For the determination of addresses, see J. E. Etherington, Ph.D. (1987), 506–9.
- <sup>29</sup> P. H. Mann, *An Approach to Urban Sociology*, (1965), 150–1.
- <sup>30</sup> D. J. Parkin, *Neighbours and Nationals*, 61–8; R. Konig, *The Community*, 54–5.
- <sup>31</sup> M. Stacey, *Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury* (1960) Oxford, 104.
- <sup>32</sup> No rigorous analysis of working-class housing has been undertaken for this study. Statements that such streets and neighbourhoods existed are based on the occupations of those living there as recorded in the CEBs and a first hand knowledge of the type of housing, much of which survives today.
- <sup>33</sup> M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (1962) Harmondsworth; G. Rose, *The Working Class* (1968), Chapter 5. For a critique see J. Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green* (1971).
- <sup>34</sup> For the social class structure of the bonfire boys see J. E. Etherington, Ph.D. (1987), 361–78.
- <sup>35</sup> For a consideration of community rather than class being the motivating source for action see J. E. Etherington, Ph.D. (1987), 473–5.
- <sup>36</sup> A considerable body of published work exists relating to the interactional aspects of social networks. See in particular F. E. Katz, 'Social Participation and Social Structure', *Social Forces* (1966), 199–210; J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends* (1974) Oxford; R. Niemeijer, 'Some Application of the Notion of Density and Network Theory' in *Network Analysis: Studies in Human Interaction*, eds. Boissevain and Mitchell, The Hague (1973), 45–64.
- <sup>37</sup> *SAE*, 8 November 1890 and 5 November 1895.
- <sup>38</sup> J. E. Etherington, 'A Curious Survival: A Sociological Analysis of the Lewes Bonfire Societies' (unpub. B.Ed. Thesis Univ. of Sussex 1977).
- <sup>39</sup> For example, J. and C. Griffiee were both Borough Society members active at the same time and although no positive identifying item has been found to establish a family link, a relationship does seem likely.
- <sup>40</sup> On the 'Fifth' the societies' headquarters were the focal point of activities, processions frequently commencing in the streets outside. Public houses also provided the venue for social occasions, annual dinners, committee meetings and other gatherings of bonfire boys.
- <sup>41</sup> E. Litwak, 'Voluntary Associations and Neighbourhood Cohesion', *American Sociological Review* **26** (2) (1961),

- 258-71; J. C. Ross, 'Towards a Reconstruction of Voluntary Association Theory' *British Journal of Sociology*, **27** (1972), 20-32.
- <sup>42</sup> J. E. Etherington, Ph.D. (1987), 307-8.
- <sup>43</sup> *SAE*, 24 November 1906, 9 February 1907 and 24 November 1911.
- <sup>44</sup> *SAE*, 12 November 1909, 3 December 1909 and 18 March 1910.
- <sup>45</sup> *SAE*, 14 November 1913.
- <sup>46</sup> J. E. Etherington, 'Lewes Bonfire Night Celebrations: An incident in their long history' *Sussex History*, **1** (4) Autumn 1977.
- <sup>47</sup> J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends* (1974), 178.
- <sup>48</sup> P. Craven and B. Wellman, 'The Network City', *Sociological Enquiry*, **43** 3-4, (1973), 80-3.

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