

◆ The naval physician and the duke: patronage in west Sussex in the mid-19th century

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This case study of the mechanics of patronage as operated during the early to mid-19th century, uses the correspondence of the 5th Duke of Richmond held at West Sussex Record Office. The paper concentrates upon just one patron, the Duke of Richmond, and one recipient of that patronage, Sir William Burnett, a naval physician who was part resident in Chichester with a son who gained, through the duke's patronage, the living at Boxgrove. The intention is to gain a better understanding of the use and value of patronage as it operated at the microcosmic level, offering detail of the underlying unwritten obligations that were taken on by both the patron and the beneficiary and how this was understood by the two parties involved.

INTRODUCTION

In the early to mid-19th century, patronage was the means by which those with power and influence maintained that power and influence. The 'patron' conferred a favour on an individual, with that beneficiary, the 'client', seen as in debt to the patron, with that favour, depending on the client's status, often called upon. At face value, patron–client relationships were voluntary and the favour heavily disguised as an act of friendship. Never was a word breathed as to it being part of a bargain or in anticipation of a return. Only would a patron apply pressure, through subtle reminders of favours given, if the client either threatened to or failed to keep his or her side of this unwritten and unsaid arrangement. Political patronage in 18th and early-19th century Britain was extensive, with every worthwhile appointment available to a gentleman obtained through political interest. For most voters, before the secret ballot introduced in 1870, the receipt of patronage was an economic necessity, often deployed to gain a useful start in life for younger sons or brothers who were often without capital. Patronage came in many forms, such as presentation to a vacant church living, recommendation to a civilian post in a government office or a direct appointment to manage an aspect of the patron's estate. All of these were once possible for rich and powerful aristocrats whose rights and privileges frequently flowed into the worlds of religion, politics and commerce, with the patronage

they possessed a valuable commodity bringing rich rewards to both the patron and the client.

A case study of the mechanics of patronage, this paper examines the relationship of Charles Gordon Lennox (1791–1860), the 5th Duke of Richmond, with one client, Sir William Burnett (1779–1861), a highly placed naval physician who for a time lived in Chichester, served at the infirmary on Broyle Road and is buried in the churchyard of Boxgrove Priory. The intention is to gain a better understanding of the use and value of patronage as it operated at a microcosmic level, offering detail of the underlying unwritten obligations that were taken on by both the patron and the client and how this was understood by the two parties involved. The primary source material used is the correspondence between the 5th Duke of Richmond and William Burnett held at West Sussex Record Office (WSRO), some 174 letters addressed to the duke between 1830 (from when in-letters survive) and 1858, and 34 from the duke in 1831–5, the only years for which out-letters survive. In addition, a small number are also addressed to Lady Caroline, the Duchess of Richmond, and a few others addressed to Archibald Hair, the duke's personal secretary, with both of whom Burnett had developed a personal acquaintance.¹ The use of this material is supplemented by Burnett's own official papers and other official papers relating to Burnett held in The National Archives at Kew (TNA) together with papers of Sir James Graham while First Lord of the Admiralty between November 1830 and June 1834, held at the Cumbria Archive Centre, Carlisle.

THE 5TH DUKE OF RICHMOND

Charles Gordon Lennox (1791–1860), Lord March until in 1819 he succeeded his father as Duke of Richmond, as head of one of the most powerful aristocratic families in the country, provides, through his extensive surviving correspondence, an excellent example of the mechanisms by which patronage worked during the middle years of the 19th century.² Owning nearly 12,000 acres of land centred on Goodwood in west Sussex provided him with extensive local patronage, enabling him to offer employment, tenancies and rented cottages, and give or deny support to neighbouring farmers and local businesses. He also used this patronage to foster the affection of his own tenants and labourers by seeking, for members of their families who could not find work on the estate, employment opportunities from those under his patronage able to offer suitable work. As a beneficiary of the duke's patronage, Burnett was one whom the duke approached for this purpose, because his high position in the naval medical service gave him influence over many appointments.

Throughout the county the duke also had great leverage, being Lord Lieutenant of Sussex from 1835 to 1860, Colonel of the Royal Sussex Light Infantry Militia from 1819, a justice of the peace and in possession of the advowsons of Boxgrove, Singleton and Tangmere.³ The first three, in particular, placed him in a powerful position of influence in many areas connected with the administration of the county. In the city of Chichester, where the duke owned land, he was in effective control of the corporation, his nominees invariably elected to the corporation, with him and four other members of his family, members in 1835.⁴ Also, between 1812 and 1819, Lord March had been one of the two members of parliament for Chichester, with his eldest younger brother, Lord John George Lennox, succeeding him until 1831; their youngest brother Lord Arthur Lennox then took the seat. John George was briefly a member for Sussex and in 1832 was the Richmond nominee for the new West Sussex constituency. The duke paid all his brothers' election expenses in 1832, but in return they were expected to use their votes in the House of Commons in accordance with his wishes. When they failed, in a division of the House in February 1834, to support the Whig administration in which the duke held a Cabinet position, both received

letters that clearly reflected the duke's displeasure. To Lord Arthur the duke expressed particular annoyance that, not only had he voted against the government in the opposition's motion regarding an enquiry into the pensions list, but also had made himself 'most conspicuous' through the utterance of 'hostile cheers', demonstrating 'a strong and decided feeling against the government'.⁵ To Lord John George, the duke dwelt in more detail on paying his brother's election and parliamentary expenses, adding that he was 'a candidate for the situation of Under Secretary of State, for a Lordship in the Treasury, for a government abroad, for a situation in the Household of His Majesty' with the duke 'earnestly and anxiously attempting to carry' these wishes 'into execution'. He would never have done so, if he had been aware of such 'hostile feelings' against the government.⁶

The duke's political influence was further enhanced by membership of the House of Lords, which could be used to influence matters of government and the appointment of government officials. A particular advantage was his close acquaintance with the Duke of Wellington, a leading member of the Tory party and Prime Minister from January 1828 to November 1830. This went back to the Peninsular campaign when, in 1810–14, he had served as the then Arthur Wellesley's aide-de-camp. However, disagreement over Wellington's support of Catholic Emancipation led Richmond, together with other members of a faction known as the ultra-Tories, to break away and ultimately bring about Wellington's downfall, voting with the Whigs and other opposition groups in 1830 to inflict a defeat on him over the civil list. In turn, Richmond temporarily gave his support to Earl Grey's reforming Whig-led coalition which came to power in 1830, with Grey appointing Richmond to the government as Postmaster General. Another acquaintance who often acceded to the duke's requests was King William IV, with the duke a frequently invited guest to his main residence, Clarence House.

SIR WILLIAM BURNETT

Scottish by birth and briefly a medical student in Edinburgh, William Burnett (1779–1861) (Fig. 1) was recruited to the Royal Navy in October 1795 as a surgeon's mate and rose to be, from 1832 to 1855, Director General of the Medical Department of



Fig. 1. Sir William Burnett from an engraving which accompanied the biographical sketch appearing in *The Lancet*, 16 November 1850. (Philip MacDougall Collection)

the Navy, the navy's chief medical officer.⁷ Under Admiral Sir John Jervis, Burnett was present at the Battle of Cape St Vincent (1797) and the assault on Cadiz (1797), going on to serve with Nelson at the battles of Abū Qīr Bay (1798) and Trafalgar (1805). By acquiring the degree of MD from the University of St Andrews, he qualified to be appointed Physician and Inspector of Hospitals of the Mediterranean Fleet in May 1810 and continued in this post until 1813.⁸ He confronted a serious outbreak of 'Malta Fever', an ill-defined variety of infections, with Burnett the first to isolate and distinguish its form and nature to differentiate it from yellow fever and other diseases with which it had previously been confused. Sometimes referred to as 'Mediterranean Fever', it nowadays is known as Brucellosis.⁹ Due to his own poor health, brought on by the demands that had been placed upon him, Burnett was permitted to return to England where, during the early winter of 1814, he was charged with overseeing the care arrangements for all seamen in the River Medway. This was an important mooring for naval warships, where his medical duties also included responsibility for thousands of French, Danish and American prisoners incarcerated in the prison hulks, together with supervising the medical arrangements for officers and seamen of an allied Russian fleet which was over-wintering in the Medway. Ignoring all risk to his own health,

Burnett successfully brought an end to a typhus epidemic that had already claimed several hundred lives. When the Russian fleet sailed for St Petersburg, its commander, Admiral George Tate recognised the significance of Burnett's presence among his own sick and wounded, by gaining the Admiralty's permission for Burnett to sail as the fleet's chief medical officer. On arrival in Russia, Tsar Alexander I awarded Burnett the Imperial Order of Saint Alexander Nevsky.¹⁰

In 1815 Burnett was placed as a naval officer on half pay and was employed as a physician in the Chichester Infirmary in the Broyle (Fig. 2), while also establishing 'a more extensive practice in that city and neighbourhood than any physician had ever done before'.¹¹ A further career move for Burnett came about in 1822 when he was appointed to the Navy's Victualling Board as one of two commissioners responsible for medical matters. This was to take him in an entirely new direction, placing him at the heart of naval administration with an office at Somerset House. Formed of civilians, but like Burnett often with previous naval experience, the Victualling Board was responsible for issuing all contracts for victuals as supplied to the navy together with storage and manufacturing of certain freshly-made provisions. In addition, since the abolition of a separate Sick and Hurt Board, the Victualling Board was responsible for all of the navy's medical arrangements, including the ordering of medical stores and the appointment of naval physicians and surgeons. Though independent of the Board of Admiralty, the board received instructions from that board, but it might override Admiralty wishes if it felt demands being made were inappropriate. A further separate civilian board also existed, the Navy Board, responsible for building, repair and maintenance of warships, chiefly performed by the naval dockyards. In joining the Victualling Board, and even more so upon its abolition in June 1832, when he was appointed Physician General of the Navy, Burnett was in a powerful and influential position. He now reported only to a lay lord sitting on the Board of Admiralty, with his recommendations rarely challenged. His responsibilities included the examination of all naval surgeons and advising who should be appointed to which ships, together with ordering medical stores and overseeing the compilation of accounts of expenditure. Other duties included



Fig. 2. William Burnett served at the infirmary on Broyle Road, the site of the later West Sussex, East Hampshire and Chichester General Infirmary and Dispensary, which was opened at the end of October 1826 and subsequently became the Royal West Sussex Hospital, but is now Forbes House. (Philip MacDougall Collection)

conducting medical examinations on wounded officers, carrying out regular tours of inspection of shore-based medical facilities and examining samples of all medical supplies.¹² He had a sizeable department of clerks, appointed upon his advice, and essential to support him in his various duties. Remaining at Somerset House as head of the naval medical branch until his retirement in 1855, the position he held, but with no change of responsibility, underwent two name changes, Burnett titled Inspector General of Naval Hospitals and the Fleet in 1841 and Director General of the Medical Department of the Navy in 1843. While sole head of naval medical affairs, Burnett worked towards improving the status and pay of naval surgeons, developing new ways of treating the mentally ill when in naval hospitals, providing accurate analyses of sicknesses suffered by those serving in the navy, and overseeing

construction of a much-needed shore-based naval hospital at Chatham to replace the hulked warships.¹³

FACTIONALISM AND PARTY POLITICS

Burnett's appointment to the Victualling Board in 1822, which obliged him to cut his professional ties with Chichester and the patients he was treating, may possibly have been a result of his connection with the 5th Duke of Richmond. At that time the duke was a supporter of the administration then in office and in an excellent position to influence the appointment. Unfortunately, the duke's papers, while complete from 1830 onwards, are missing for all of the earlier years, making only surmise possible. If the duke had, in 1822, intervened on Burnett's behalf, it would explain one simple mystery, why Burnett was offered a position on the Victualling

Board under a Tory administration when his previous patrons had been Whigs. While serving in the Mediterranean in the late 1790s Burnett had come to the attention of Scottish-born aristocrat, the Hon. George Keith Elphinstone 1st Viscount Keith, second-in-command of the Mediterranean fleet. Keith frequently distributed patronage to those who did not favour Pitt's Tory administration, taking on Burnett as one deserving of his patronage. This resulted in Burnett, a few months after the Battle of Cape St Vincent, being presented to Admiral John Jervis, commander-in-chief, for promotion to the rank of surgeon. Jervis, too, was opposed to William Pitt's administration, and it seems possible that Burnett was, in part, favoured because of his own family loyalties which were skewed also against that administration. Yet, while Jervis was a vehement Whig and was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty during the brief Whig administration of Henry Addington (1801–4), he was no supporter of incompetence, and would most certainly have rejected Keith's application on Burnett's behalf if Burnett had not sufficiently proved himself.¹⁴

When, with the end of the French wars, there was a surplus of deserving naval surgeons suitable for appointment to the Victualling Board, it is unlikely that a man with Burnett's connections would have been offered the post of medical commissioner, unless he had already gained an influential Tory backer, such as the Duke of Richmond. There is no doubt that Burnett was under his patronage by 1830, as is absolutely clear from the duke's personal correspondence surviving from that year onwards: the patron–client relationship between the two, by that time, long-developed. The possibility exists for the duke having been Burnett's patron even before Burnett's arrival in Chichester in 1815. Penn indicates a friendship between the two began only upon Burnett's first arrival in Chichester, but provides no evidence.¹⁵

Also needing explaining is why, having been appointed to the Victualling Board by a Tory administration, Burnett went on, under the Whigs, to gain even greater authority through appointment as Physician General of the Navy.¹⁶ This was a time when senior government administrative posts were only gained through patronage, with loyalty to the patron and his own political alliances expected in return. Members of an incoming administration expected to use their newly won

power to reward their supporters, creating the necessary opportunities through the removal of those appointed by members of the outgoing administration. However, a complication within the civil departments of the navy, not arising in all government departments, was that, through appointment by royal patent, the holder of the office had a sinecure for life, only removable from office if found guilty of gross incompetence. The Whigs, under Charles Grey, the 2nd Earl Grey, specifically set about ending that arrangement by abolishing the victualling and navy boards, so giving the possibility of dismissing all members appointed by the outgoing administration. That the navy's civilian boards were especially targeted goes back to the year 1806 when Grey himself had been First Lord of the Admiralty. Then he had been thwarted by those at the civilian boards, appointed by previous Tory administrations, who had failed to give him support. As Prime Minister, he now wished to take his revenge. To keep the civilian boards would allow replacement of members only when they died or voluntarily retired; abolishing the boards would give him the free hand to dismiss each and every one of the navy's civilian commissioners.¹⁷ Admittedly, on the Whigs gaining power, a few of them chose to retire, receiving in return a government pension. In place, and under a new system of naval administration, appointments would be made under warrant by the Admiralty, which the First Lord, Sir James Graham, now heading the Board of Admiralty, indicated to Parliament was 'a more efficacious plan' for when a change of government took place. To this he added, 'it would not affect those individuals while they conducted themselves in a satisfactory manner.'¹⁸ Here was the inception of a new style of government, that of those responsible for administering government affairs being free of party politics and patronage, forming instead a body with a strong public service ethos. This was something that Grey and other Whigs were moving towards, opposition to patronage having grown within the Whig Party through the belief that ministers had acquired too much power and that politics had grown corrupt.¹⁹

Despite Burnett having in the Duke of Richmond a powerful patron who was now also a member of the Whig cabinet, Richmond appears to have played no part in Burnett's appointment as Physician General of the Navy. If it had, that would have appeared in the duke's correspondence which survives in

full for the years 1830 to 1832. Burnett made no request for the duke's support and Richmond made no offer to help secure him the post. This is telling and indicates that Burnett did not need the duke's support, as he had been informed, at an early stage, that he was to be retained in a senior position by those now holding the reins of government. That he was favoured by the Whig-led coalition is clear, for it was in May 1831, only five months after it took office, that Burnett was presented to King William IV by Graham as First Lord, this being the occasion of Burnett being knighted.²⁰ A few months later, a discussion paper presented to Prime Minister Grey by Graham confirms the new government's desire to retain Burnett, with Graham suggesting it to be a wise move, with only one other member of the Victualling Board retained. More important, the paper lays down the exact reason for Burnett not being dismissed: his retention, it was argued, as a Tory government appointee, prevented 'this new arrangement' for administering the civilian departments of the navy being 'tainted by the appearance of a large exercise of Patronage'.²¹ Such, of course, would please those Whigs most opposed to patronage, while helping ensure their support for the abolition of the two naval civil boards, a move that was coming under heavy criticism from the Tory opposition, with many beneficiaries of earlier government patronage now about to lose what they had assumed was their sinecure for life.²² Confirmation that reduction of government patronage had also been a Whig ambition, even if carried out in excess of what Grey ultimately viewed as desirable, came in his premier's resignation speech made in the House of Lords on 9 July 1834, when Grey declared:

Places have been abolished, and the patronage of the Crown has been diminished, to a degree which your Lordships may, perhaps, consider inexpedient; and with regard to which, being now divested of any further interest in the question as a Minister of the Crown, I feel bound in justice, to admit that my only doubt is, whether we have not done rather too much.²³

Even so, Burnett would still not have been appointed if he had not met certain other criteria, as revealed by Graham in discussions with Sir John Barrow, a senior secretary of the Board of Admiralty, with whom Graham regularly confided. To Barrow, Graham hinted that Burnett could be trusted and

would be compliant to the wishes of the new administration, with Burnett viewed as 'among the most intelligent' of naval administrators.²⁴ That Burnett had been at an earlier stage of his life under the patronage of Whig-leaning naval officers, may also have been useful in his retention of office: but that is no more than conjecture, based on Grey having once been a personal and political friend of Earl St Vincent.²⁵

THE MECHANISM OF MID-19TH CENTURY POLITICAL PATRONAGE

While the Whig-led coalition under Grey did achieve its aim of reducing the number of government office appointments through patronage, this was relatively small and certainly did not interfere with the general mechanism of patronage as demonstrated by the surviving correspondence between the 5th Duke of Richmond and Burnett. In June 1831, just after the Whig coalition had achieved power, the duke interceded with the Foreign Secretary, Henry Viscount Palmerston, about Burnett's request to be allowed to wear, as an administrator in the civil branch of the navy, the Imperial Order of Saint Alexander Nevsky awarded by Tsar Alexander I. In the 19th century, as now, the wearing of a foreign award was only permissible with the express permission of the government through the sovereign. Palmerston felt unable to support this request.²⁶ But the matter did not end here, as Richmond then went on to approach the king. While Palmerston's ruling was accepted, William IV chose to recognise Burnett's service with the Russian fleet, bestowing on Burnett an alternative award, membership of the Second Class of the Hanoverian Order.²⁷ Possibly, helping Richmond to persuade the King to look favourably upon his client, was the duke had recently been given a copy of Burnett's own account of his work on defeating the 1814 Typhoid epidemic in the Medway.²⁸ Six months later Richmond set about securing a further honour for Burnett, that of his appointment as naval physician to William IV, Burnett having previously held a not dissimilar position, Physician-in-Ordinary, to William prior to his accession to the throne.²⁹

Another early letter in the surviving correspondence is from Richmond to Burnett asking him as to the correct office he ought to send an application, which he enclosed, for an able

seaman of a warship to gain a pension, presumably an out-pension from the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich.³⁰ In December 1831, Richmond writes to Burnett on behalf of a Mr Wardroper of Midhurst who 'is anxious to enter the Royal Navy as an approved surgeon', asking of Burnett if he could 'give him any hope'.³¹ Here, in this short chain, Wardroper is a further recipient of the duke's patronage, the returned favour, at the very least, will be to secure Richard Wardroper's vote in any forthcoming county election, with the duke calling upon Burnett to use his influence to allow the duke to bestow that favour and so assure himself of Wardroper's political support.

While Richmond had no influence upon Burnett's retention in office following abolition of the Victualling Board, his remaining within the navy's administrative structure was to prove of undoubted advantage to the duke. As Physician General of the Navy, Burnett now had greater independence, able to make appointments in both naval hospitals and ships without consultation. Through Burnett, some of those positions became available to Richmond, the naval physician always looking favourably upon suitable candidates for office from among those brought to his attention by the duke. In underpinning his own power base, this was a useful additional commodity that could be used by Richmond in garnering votes for his chosen candidates in the parliamentary seats he controlled and for elections to the Corporation of Chichester.³² One such politically motivated request was sent to Burnett in June 1833, when Richmond asked Burnett to find an appointment for a Mr Savage, recently paid off from the 52-gun fourth rate *Winchester*. The duke was especially concerned that Burnett should find an appointment because, as the duke explained, the request had come to him via Sir James Lloyd of Lancing, a member of the local nobility who had, in the general election of 1832, proposed Richmond's brother, Lord John George Lennox, for the newly created electoral division of West Sussex.³³ Another Chichester voter whom the duke groomed in a similar fashion was Francis Diggens, a one-time political enemy, through being a Whig and a supporter of reform. With Richmond having accepted a ministerial post in the reforming Whig-led coalition, Diggens was a potential ally. For the purpose of retaining Diggens's newly acquired loyalty, the duke, in

September 1832, requested of Burnett that he might seek out a captain who would provide a naval berth for Diggens's son.³⁴

A request more clearly associated with Richmond's political power base in the city of Chichester's elected Corporation was sent to Burnett in December of that year, to gain a position for a person brought to Richmond's attention by the Mayor, Harry Comper.³⁵ Through the distribution of favours and the grant of many substantial benefits to the city, the Richmond family had obtained control over the Corporation, as far back as the Corporation books go. According to the Royal Commission on Municipal Corporations, in 1835, 'Occasionally, he has been asked whom he wished to be elected into the Common Council; when this has not been done, care has been taken not to appoint anyone who was not considered likely to support the family influence.'³⁶

However, the city of Chichester neither before the election of 1832, nor following the broadening of the franchise that came with the Great Reform Act, had ever had an electorate small enough to be controlled through dissemination of patronage. Similarly, the county division of West Sussex, a constituency created in 1832, had too large an electorate to be controlled in this way.³⁷ Instead, Richmond needed to show that he was able to bring a wide range of benefits that would garner votes to secure his candidates' election. Again, Burnett was a useful ally, as naval appointments could be seen as benefitting the wider community, by providing employment for recipients of parish support and therefore a financial burden on the electorate. In April 1839, Burnett indicated to Richmond that, if he recommended four boys from the Chichester workhouse, the captain of the newly commissioned *Poictiers* would provide berths. Each boy should be of at least 5ft in height and given £5 from the parish 'to fit them out'.³⁸

When presenting names to Burnett for employment, the duke sometimes did so to foster on his estate, compliant, industrious, hardworking tenants and labourers. While not all the sons of those who toiled on the estate could be offered tenancies or jobs, the duke could acquire, as a return on his patronage to Burnett, suitable alternative employment. For Richmond, it was a means to the end of gaining his tenants' and labourers' affection, as 'the man who labours for affection is worth a hundred who work for hire.'³⁹

One such opportunity to provide work outside the estate for those who the Duke felt to be deserving of such a prospect was provided by Burnett when he informed the duke, during the summer of 1831, a time when Burnett was holding office as the senior medical commissioner on the Navy's Victualling Board, based in Somerset House, that a vacancy has occurred in the Victualling Office for a Messenger. At that time Burnett, as a member of the Victualling Board, had exclusive right to appoint a certain number of office messengers and clerks, a form of low-level patronage available to those who ran the civil departments of the navy. Rather than choosing to name an appointee, Burnett asked the duke if he would put forward an 'honest, sober and steady' candidate.⁴⁰ Thereby, Richmond was also sending a message to his estate workers, that such rewards were given to the families of those who were industrious and were themselves 'honest, sober and steady'. Indeed, the duke already had a reputation for dismissing from his employment men of bad character, openly stating that 'he would have no one on his estate who spent money in a beer shop.'⁴¹ At agricultural society meetings across the county, he frequently reiterated the need to support industrious and deserving workers, encouraging others to do likewise, for it would, he believed, not only benefit individual landowners, but the nation as a whole. For example, at a dinner of the Petworth Agricultural Association in June 1845, the duke was reported as saying:

With a moral and industrious population, the country will become widely different in its state and prospects. Without harmony between the different classes of society, no progress could be made in advance.... He wished, if he might be allowed a Sussex expression, to make the labourers feel that they had a stake in the same hedge as [their employers]. They did their utmost to prosecute the welfare of the labourers, and the labourers will in the long run know who are their best friends.⁴²

While Burnett was at the Chichester Infirmary, Richmond may also have sought to refer 'honest, sober and steady' tenants and labourers in need of medical care. A possible source of evidence would be Burnett's case books, but these appear to no longer exist.

Typically, Richmond sought naval appointments two or three times a year. But the nature of the

relationship with Burnett was never one that placed Burnett in a position which could compromise the high standards that he required of the naval medical service. If a candidate seemed inappropriate, he would inform Richmond, giving his reasons, attempting to soften the refusal by suggesting either an alternative position or the further qualifications or experience which might qualify the candidate for a similar position. Thus the duke requested Burnett to recommend a certain Mr Lawrence for the medical department. Initially Burnett declined, but indicated that if Lawrence should pass specified medical examinations, then he would be willing to make the recommendation. In time, Lawrence did pass them, whereupon Burnett nominated him for a position at the Haslar naval hospital in Gosport.⁴³ Burnett also obliged Richmond by giving special consideration to the purchase of medical supplies, or similar, from individuals put forward by the duke, with any contracts issued allowing Richmond to show that he was working for the benefit of the community over which he held sway. The quality of the merchandise produced by these individuals was a final determining factor, but clearly a word from the duke was not without significance. Having inherited, in 1835, Gordon Castle in the Scottish Highlands, the duke put forward a member of a prominent local family, William Hogarth, of Hogarth & Co., an Aberdeen manufacturer of preserved meat and soup. As these products were not medicinal in nature, and so outside of Burnett's direct authority, he informed Richmond that it would give him great pleasure to do everything he could to support the request, through discussing the matter with the Comptroller of Victualling, Thomas Grant, 'a very old friend'.⁴⁴

Patronage, while inducing a feeling of gratitude, did not eliminate the need for the duke to operate a continuing regime of careful management and close contact with those who were part of the unstated arrangement. Nothing would cause greater resentment than the belief of an individual who, once having benefitted from an act of patronage, from then on was taken for granted, with calls made by the duke for Burnett to undertake further favours having to be met by reciprocal favours on the part of the duke. On Queen Victoria's accession, Burnett lost his position of Physician to the monarch, and wrote to the duke in July 1837 that he had learnt from 'a good source' that 'every kind of intrigue is going on respecting the appointment of Physician

to the Queen.' Nevertheless, he hoped that the duke might approach Viscount Melbourne, then Prime Minister, to recommend to him that Burnett be appointed to this position. In doing so, he suggested that Richmond might mention Burnett's long service, 'such as no other man either in the military or civil branches of the navy can lay claim' and that if he were appointed, it would be a 'compliment to the navy'. The duke did approach Melbourne, but without success, informed that 'only three Physicians were to be appointed.'⁴⁵

Much easier for the duke to oblige was a request made by Burnett in March 1837 on behalf of an old school friend, asking of the duke if he would appoint him to a newly vacant position of secretary.⁴⁶ For his son, also named William, who was to enter the Church, Burnett sought further favours, writing to the duke in May 1834 while his son was at Oxford, seeking his support for William to be awarded a 'demieship' to continue his studies at Magdalen College.⁴⁷ In January 1843, there was further correspondence on behalf of William, Burnett writing that he would be 'much obliged' if the duke would communicate with Lord Granville Somerset, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster,

to obtain for him the vacant living of Millbrook in Bedfordshire, which was in Somerset's patronage.⁴⁸ Two years later, Burnett made a further request on behalf of his son, seeking the support of the duke to gain the curacy of a second parish, this in the gift of Lord Stanley, following the elevation of the present incumbent to a bishopric.⁴⁹

Outwardly, patronage gave the appearance of being an act of seemingly disinterested friendship, and for the purpose of helping create this image it was reinforced by regular social contact, so laying a deeper foundation to the political interest that was the purpose of the dispensation of patronage. On one occasion, Richmond made it clear that he could only offer patronage to those he personally knew, writing in May 1832 to one individual:

I beg to acquaint you that I receive so many applications from gentlemen with whom I am acquainted to apply for situations under government, that I have been obliged to decline recommending any person I do not personally know.⁵⁰

In meeting those his vote he had secured, or those who helped him provide the means of securing those votes, the duke could use such social



Fig. 3. Goodwood House, the residence of the 5th Duke of Richmond, where Dr William Burnett was a frequent and welcome guest. (Philip MacDougall Collection)

occasions to seek a continuation of that friendship without reference to returned favours and their continuing support, so placing him in a better position than a patron whose contact was only through more distant written communication. Burnett, for one, was constantly assured of being a welcome visitor to Goodwood House (Fig. 3), invited to join shooting parties at Goodwood, with the duke also providing Burnett with occasional gifts, such as a haunch of venison from the estate.⁵¹ Letters between the two, while often formal, sometimes made reference to the well-being of both their families, the duke enquiring after the health of any member of Burnett's family who might have suffered a bout of ill health or recent poor fortune, and Burnett doing likewise in his letters. Such letters also included an exchange of information, with Burnett informing the duke of changes taking place in the Admiralty and of any difficulties confronting the medical department. At the time of the Crimean

War, Burnett wrote despairingly, 'God knows how I shall find medical officers in the spring when, if the war continues, we shall have both floating batteries and gun boats to provide for independently of the general service of the fleet.'⁵²

A further example of Burnett reciprocating friendship, was in sending to the duke, who had a particular interest in the development of agriculture, seeds of various trees and plants that had been brought into the country on naval warships. The Admiralty had its own interest in the investigation of timbers, searching out trees that might prove more advantageous for ship building than those already adopted. Captains of warships regularly collected tree and seed samples found on foreign cruises; the bulk of these taken to Kew Gardens for further investigation. It seems that some, viewed as surplus to need, were acquired by Burnett and sent to Goodwood; among these were kauri tree seeds from New Zealand (viewed as ideal for topmasts),



Fig. 4. East Pallant House, Chichester, now owned by Chichester District Council, where Dr William Burnett was resident with his wife Maria. (Philip MacDougall Collection)



Fig. 5. The Priory Church of St Mary and St Blaise where William Burnett's son, also named William, gained, through the Duke's patronage, the living, and where both William and Maria Burnett were buried. (Philip MacDougall Collection)

Norfolk Island pine plants, dwarf acorns from the Mediterranean and melon seeds from Smyrna.⁵³ On other occasions, Burnett provided the duke with curios brought to England by naval ships operating in distant waters, such as a turtle in 1834, described by Burnett as small in size, 'but I have no doubt you will take the will for the deed.'⁵⁴

In April 1855 Burnett, retiring from the naval medical service on a very generous government pension of £1000 per annum, returned to Chichester,

at that time living with his wife Maria at East Pallant House (Fig.4), making it easy for the perpetuation of his connection with the Duke of Richmond.⁵⁵ In February 1858, Richmond presented William, Burnett's son, to the living of Boxgrove (Fig.5), an advowson in the duke's patronage. Having become vacant on the death of the previous incumbent, the Revd William Turner, the presentation of Burnett's son to the living is of interest, as it comes nearly three years after Burnett's retirement and at a time

when he is no longer in a position to offer return favours.⁵⁶ While it now placed a second Burnett within the duke's patronage, it does seem an act of particular melliflence, there doubtless being others who might have been so rewarded and able to offer more in return. For Burnett it had the advantage of keeping his son's family in close proximity during his declining years. Unfortunately for Burnett, his retirement was neither lengthy nor especially happy, his wife Maria dying in 1859 and William, himself, in February 1861. The 5th Duke of Richmond died only a few months prior to Burnett, on 21 October 1860 at the family mansion, 51 Portland Place, London, of dropsy, and was buried in the family vault in Chichester Cathedral nine days later.

CONCLUSION

It can be seen from the evidence given that patronage was based on a complex relationship that, once initiated, might well last throughout the entire lifetime of the patron or the beneficiary. Rarely was it a one-way act of kindness, the patron being concerned to use any act of beneficence to

bring, in return, some kind of partisan reward. Sometimes that might come through the position now gained by the beneficiary, while at other times the return reward might be an outcome of perceived kindness to the community and a gain in the patron's overall popularity in the borough or constituency being cultivated. In appearance, the bestowing of patronage gives the impression of being a disinterested act of friendship, reinforced by social contact and the reciprocal writing of letters that made reference to personal family matters. In the case of Burnett, the favours bestowed appear to have reflected a very real friendship, as the patronage bestowed continued even after Burnett's retirement from the Admiralty, when Burnett had little to offer the duke in the form of return favours, although he may still have possessed useful contacts at the Admiralty and the civil branch of the navy at Somerset House.

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NOTES

- ¹ West Sussex Record Office, Goodwood Mss (hereafter Goodwood) 1432–1820. The friendship between Burnett and Hair was doubtless helped by Hair being a former Army surgeon. In total, West Sussex Record Office holds about 70,000 pieces of correspondence written or received by the 5th Duke of Richmond and covering the period from just before the duke joined Lord Grey's cabinet in 1830, until his death in 1860.
- ² F. M. L. Thompson, 2004, 'Lennox, Charles Gordon, 5th Duke of Richmond and 5th Duke of Lennox in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004) (hereafter *Oxford DNB*), and more extensive biographical detail in Lord William Pitt Lennox, *Memoir of Charles Gordon Lennox, 5th Duke of Richmond* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1862) and D. Morris, *The Honour of Richmond: A History of the Lords, Earls and Dukes of Richmond* (York: William Sessions, 2000).
- ³ *Crockford's Clerical Directory: Being a Biographical and Statistical Book of Reference, Facts Relating to The Clergy and the Church* (London, 1865). An advowson is the right of a patron to present an ecclesiastical preferment, the exercise of this right called a presentation.
- ⁴ As part of that elected body in 1835, the duke held the office of bailiff and High Steward.

- ⁵ Goodwood 1487, 21 Feb. 1834.
- ⁶ Goodwood 1487, 21 Feb. 1834.
- ⁷ 'Biographical Sketch of Sir William Burnett' *The Lancet*, 16 November 1850, 558–63. G. T. Bettany, rev. C. E. J. Herrick, 'Burnett, Sir William (1779–1861), naval physician', *Oxford DNB*, gives further biographical detail drawn from his writings and official reports. A complete list of ships on which Burnett served is given in The National Archives (hereafter TNA), ADM 196/8 Medical Officers. Dates of entry: 1790–1848, f. 363.
- ⁸ <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/biographical-register/data/documents/1370201428>.
- ⁹ Burnett was the first to differentiate between the various fevers affecting seamen in the Mediterranean. See W. Burnett, *A practical account of the Mediterranean fever, as it appeared in the ships and hospitals* (London: J. Callow, 1816).
- ¹⁰ TNA, ADM 1/3794, Letters from the Victualling Board; ADM 98/224, Letters Relating to Prisoners of War, 1813–16. Anon, *A Voyage to St Petersburg in 1814* (London: Sir Richard Phillips & Co., 1822).
- ¹¹ *The Lancet*, 16 Nov. 1850, 162.
- ¹² TNA, ADM 1/3477, 9 Jun. 1832: Instructions for Physician of the Navy.
- ¹³ It was in hulked warships, used as floating hospitals, that Burnett had fought the typhus epidemic in the Medway,

- probably inspiring him to ensure that a shore-based hospital be built for the Medway at Chatham.
- ¹⁴ R. M. Sunter, *Patronage and Politics in Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986), 50–6.
- ¹⁵ C. Penn, 'Sir William Burnett (1779–1861), professional head of the Royal Naval Medical Department and entrepreneur', *Journal of Medical Biography* **13** (2004), 141.
- ¹⁶ The reforms to the civil departments of the navy under 2 Wm IV c.40 came into effect on 11 Jun. 1832. For more on the background to these reforms, see P. MacDougall, *London and the Georgian Navy* (Stroud: History Press, 2013).
- ¹⁷ Cumbria Archive Centre, Carlisle, Graham Papers, 'Consolidation of the Navy and Victualling Boards', 6 Dec 1831, f.2.
- ¹⁸ Parliamentary debates, Hansard, 14 February 1832, f. 357.
- ¹⁹ W. Vandenebee and S. Horton, 'The evolution of the British public service ethos: a historical institutional approach to explaining continuity and change', in W.J.C. Leo et al. (eds), *Ethics and Integrity of Governance: Perspectives Across Frontiers* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008), 7–24. See also, J. Wade, *The extraordinary black book: an exposition of abuses in church and state, courts of law, representation, municipal and corporate bodies; with a précis of the House of Commons past, present, and to come* (London: E. Wilson, 1832), especially iv–vi.
- ²⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 26 May 1831.
- ²¹ 'Consolidation of the Navy and Victualling Boards', f. 9.
- ²² Parliamentary debates, Hansard, Feb. to Jun. 1832. The first reading and debate on the Navy Civil Departments bill took place on 14 Feb. 1832 with the opposition mounting a robust attack on the bill by those who had either served on the Board of Admiralty or retired from one of the two navy civil boards.
- ²³ Parliamentary debates, Hansard, 9 Jul. 1834, f.1314.
- ²⁴ J. Barrow, *An Autobiographical Memoir* (London: John Murray, 1847), 418.
- ²⁵ G. M. Trevelyan, *Lord Grey of the Reform Bill* (London: Longmans Green, 1920), 145.
- ²⁶ Rules Governing the Acceptance and Wearing of Foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals by Citizens of the United Kingdom and Her Overseas Territories https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/426384/Rules_for_the_Acceptance_of_Foreign_Awards.pdf (accessed 3 May 2018).
- ²⁷ Goodwood 1487, 10 Jun. 1831.
- ²⁸ Goodwood 1487; 1433, 14 May 1831. Probably Burnett's account was a handwritten version, as the duke returned it to him, rather than the printed version published later in the year as *An Account of a Contagious Fever which Occurred among Danish and American Prisoners of War at Chatham in the Years 1813, 1814* (London: Burgess and Hill, 1831).
- ²⁹ Goodwood 1435, 4 Jan. 1832.
- ³⁰ Goodwood 1435, 25 Jun. 1831.
- ³¹ Goodwood 1435, 31 Dec. 1831. According to *Pigot's Sussex Directory*, 1832–4, Wardroper was an attorney, so one assumes the Wardroper referred to is his son or, possibly, a nephew. See *Pigot and Co.'s Royal National and Commercial Directory and Topography of the Counties of Kent, Surrey, Sussex* (London, J. Pigot & Co., 1839).
- ³² This was an age when there was no secrecy in how votes were cast, with poll books published after each election providing the names of every voter and for whom they voted.
- ³³ Goodwood 1485, 26 Jun. 1833. Although Richmond refers to Lancing as Lloyd's place of residence, *Pigot's Sussex Directory*, 1832–34, gives his address as 62 Regency Square, Brighton. In 1827 Lloyd, a former Member of Parliament for Steyning, and himself under the patronage of the Duke of Norfolk at that time, purchased the manor of Lancing, where his family had owned land since the early 18th century, and by 1834 he owned four-fifths of the parish. Lord Grey's ministry had made him a baronet in 1831.
- ³⁴ Goodwood 1485, 10 Sep. 1833. For further detail of Francis Diggens see. D. R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820–1832* (2009), available at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/chichester> (accessed 10 May 2018)
- ³⁵ Goodwood 1485, 12 Dec. 1833.
- ³⁶ 'The City of Chichester: Parliamentary history', in L. F. Salzman (ed.), *A History of the County of Sussex: 3* (London: Oxford UP, 1935), 99.
- ³⁷ Prior to 1832 the parliamentary constituency of Sussex returned two members as did the city of Chichester. Following the Great Reform Act, the constituency of Sussex was replaced by two separate constituencies, West and East Sussex each returning two members while Chichester retained two members but with the boundaries of the constituency extended.
- ³⁸ Goodwood 1599, 28 Apr. 1839.
- ³⁹ The Duke of Richmond in a speech given to fellow agriculturalists reported in *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 9 Oct. 1841 and quoted in D. Roberts, *Paternalism in early Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 109. Roberts, in looking at the operation of patriarchy in Victorian Sussex, concentrates not on the political advantages but on the efforts of leading landowners in the county, including the Duke of Richmond, to use the tool of patriarchy as part of a reward system that encouraged honest, industrious and hard working men.
- ⁴⁰ Goodwood 1484, 23 Jul. 1831.
- ⁴¹ Roberts (1979), 109.
- ⁴² *Sussex Advertiser*, 24 Jun. 1845
- ⁴³ Goodwood 1651, 27 Jan. 1843.
- ⁴⁴ Goodwood 1744, 2 Apr. 1851.
- ⁴⁵ Goodwood 1583, 17 Jul. 1837.
- ⁴⁶ Goodwood 1583, 23 Mar. 1837.
- ⁴⁷ Goodwood 1475, 30 May 1834. Burnett was referring to a demyship, awarded to forty poor scholars to support their education at the college.
- ⁴⁸ Goodwood 1651, Jan. 1843.
- ⁴⁹ Goodwood 1584, 24 Feb. 1845.
- ⁵⁰ Goodwood 1484, 25 May 1832.
- ⁵¹ Goodwood 1584, 14 Feb. 1838; 1582, 4 Oct. 1836.
- ⁵² Goodwood 1779, 20 Oct. 1854.
- ⁵³ Goodwood 1636, 14 Oct. 1842; 1599, 22 Jan. 1839; 1484, 25 May 1832; 1470, 13 Dec. 1833.
- ⁵⁴ Goodwood 1475, 30 May 1834.
- ⁵⁵ It was in East Pallant House that Burnett died. See 'The late Sir William Burnett', *The Lancet*, 23 February 1861.
- ⁵⁶ Goodwood 1820, 12 Jan. 1858.

