

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

The Parliamentary and Municipal History  
of the  
Borough of Poole, Dorset  
c.1740-c.1840

by  
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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

HISTORY

Master of Philosophy

THE PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL HISTORY OF THE BOROUGH OF POOLE, DORSET,  
c.1740-c.1840

by Derek Frank Beamish

During the 18th century Poole became the leading British port in the Newfoundland trade. It was thus the centre of a complex pattern of commerce involving Poole merchants in the organisation of long distance voyages and the exercise of considerable authority over the population of Newfoundland itself. The port's success emphasized the distinction already existing between Poole and the county of Dorset because of the town's status as a county corporate.

The merchant oligarchy in the Corporation provided reasonably effective municipal government by contemporary standards. The town was affected by the concern for urban improvement in the 18th century and the Corporation responded to this. Unlike some other corporations, it remained an active body after the passage of an improvement act. In the early 19th century it reformed its administration.

At first generally disposed to accept government influence in parliamentary elections because of its economic interests, the merchant oligarchy became more independent in its attitude in the 1760s. It laid great emphasis on the independent interests of the town in the early 19th century. However, the contrasting tendency, to defer to government, remained of some importance until the eve of parliamentary reform.

The collapse of the Newfoundland trade in 1815 and its failure to recover helped to produce deep political divisions in the community. The emergence of a powerful local Whig aristocratic influence in the 1820s contributed to these differences. The coming of municipal reform brought further bitter struggles which virtually paralysed municipal life in the early years of the new town council.



## PREFACE

The period covered by this study was one of particular significance for the town of Poole. It begins at a time when the port, having recently emerged from a long period of depression, was about to enjoy many years of virtually unbroken prosperity. It ends at a point when it had almost completely lost its traditional source of wealth. The choice of this period thus provides an opportunity to examine the interaction between the economic, social and political development of the local community during the years of its rise to a new importance and its subsequent decline. Beginning in the classical period of the 18th century constitution, the period closes at a time when it is possible to assess the immediate effects of parliamentary and municipal reform on the town.

The history of Poole in these years has been viewed against the background of national political developments and some comparison made with the nature of municipal government and political aspirations in certain other towns.

With one exception, academic research into the history of Poole in this period has been concerned previously with its economic development and has made understandably limited use of the wealth of documentary evidence available in the Borough Archives. Because this study was virtually complete when Mr. T.A. McDonald submitted his M.Litt. thesis on the Electoral History of Poole 1832-1885 to the University of Bristol in May 1981, I have not had the opportunity of making use of his work.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

Add. MSS	Additional Manuscripts
<u>B.I.H.R.</u>	<u>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</u>
B.L.	British Library
D.C.R.O.	Dorset County Record Office
ed.; eds.	editor; editors
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
H.M.C.	Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts
MSS	Manuscripts
P.B.A.	Poole Borough Archives
P.G.M.	Poole Guildhall Museum
<u>P.P.</u>	<u>Parliamentary Papers</u>
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
<u>Proc., D.N.H.A.S.</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society</u>
<u>S.J.</u>	<u>Salisbury Journal</u>
<u>T.R.H.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Histor- ical Society</u>

Printed works cited in the footnotes were published in London unless otherwise stated.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE COUNTY OF DORSET AND THE BOROUGH AND COUNTY OF THE TOWN OF POOLE

c.1740

Dorset in the 18th century was primarily an agricultural county, devoted to pastoral farming. Dorset sheep, raised on the extensive chalk downlands, had a high reputation.<sup>(1)</sup> The Blackmore Vale, in the north of the county, supported cattle and dairy farming. Communications by road within Dorset were poor<sup>(2)</sup> and the twenty market towns in the county served relatively small areas. Only four of them, Blandford, Bridport, Shaftesbury and Sherborne, had become specialised markets.<sup>(3)</sup>

Industrial development was limited but there were centres of the cloth industry in the county and gloves and buttons were also made.<sup>(4)</sup> Bridport had an important rope and net industry, although this had declined in the 17th and early 18th centuries.<sup>(5)</sup> The Dorset ports benefited from the dependence on sea transport dictated by the inadequate road system.<sup>(6)</sup> Lyme Regis, Weymouth and Poole were engaged in coastal trade and had also developed foreign trade, but the deficiencies of the harbours at Lyme and Weymouth in particular limited their growth as ports.<sup>(7)</sup>

Since only two peers actually resided in the county at this time<sup>(8)</sup> this predominantly rural society was dominated by a substantial country gentry, some of whose families had been long established in Dorset. For example, Edmund Morton-Pleydell (?1693-1754, Tory M.P. for Dorset 1727-47) was head of a family which could trace its descent from the 15th century and had estates in Somerset, Wiltshire, Yorkshire and Ireland as well as Dorset.<sup>(9)</sup> The Chafins of Chettle, who owned six Dorset manors and land in Somerset, were one of a number of families which had emerged in Elizabethan times.<sup>(10)</sup> More recently established proprietors included the Welds of Lulworth, who owned over 12,000 acres by the 1770s,<sup>(11)</sup> the Drax family of Charborough with over 13,000 acres<sup>(12)</sup> and the Webbs of Canford who held estates in thirteen counties.<sup>(13)</sup>

During the first half of the 18th century the wealth and confidence of the Dorset gentry is shown in the numerous new houses they built. Milborne House was "much improved and repaired" in 1729 by Edmund Morton-Pleydell.<sup>(14)</sup> Robert Brown (1670-1734) rebuilt his homes at Forston and Frampton.<sup>(15)</sup> George Pitt and James Frampton built completely new houses in 1720 and 1744 respectively.<sup>(16)</sup>

The marriages made by Dorset gentry were another indication of their standing. Joseph Damer married the Duke of Dorset's only daughter in 1742.<sup>(17)</sup> John Bond (1717-1784), M.P. for Corfe Castle 1747-61 and 1764-80, married a Miss Dummer who had "a fortune of upwards of £20,000";<sup>(18)</sup> while Henry Bankes (1700-76) who was also M.P. for Corfe Castle, from 1741 to 1762, chose for his wife a daughter of a late Bishop of Bath and Wells.<sup>(19)</sup> Marriages like these helped to keep the Dorset squires in touch with a wider society than that of the county and demonstrate that they were for the most part far from being so many Squire Westerns.

The Dorset landowners were naturally the political as well as social leaders of the county. They enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the county representation between 1707 and 1801.<sup>(20)</sup> Meeting frequently at the Blandford or Salisbury races, at the cock matches held regularly in the Blue Boar at Salisbury,<sup>(21)</sup> or for the hunting and shooting on Cranborne Chase,<sup>(22)</sup> the landowners were able to add to their collective influence. Thus in 1750 an attempt was made at the Salisbury races to settle the result of a forthcoming by-election in Dorchester.<sup>(23)</sup>

Individual country gentlemen enjoyed electoral interests in the boroughs of the county. For example, Corfe Castle was controlled by the Bonds of Creech Grange and the Bankeses of Kingston Lacy.<sup>(24)</sup> Family interests belonging to the Pitts of Strathfieldsaye, Hampshire (who also had Dorset estates), and the Draxes of Charborough, dominated elections in Wareham after 1734.<sup>(25)</sup> The Trenchards of Bloxworth and Lychett Matravers possessed an interest in Poole.<sup>(26)</sup>

Aristocratic influence in the boroughs was understandably less developed. Lord Coventry had a powerful interest in Bridport, however,<sup>(27)</sup> and Lord Shaftesbury controlled one seat in Shaftesbury. Stephen Fox, created Lord Ilchester in 1741, also had an interest in Shaftesbury.<sup>(28)</sup> The Duke of Newcastle's small Dorset estates carried some influence in Dorchester<sup>(29)</sup> but the Prince of Wales's Dorset manors, belonging to the Duchy of Cornwall, did not have any appreciable electoral influence.<sup>(30)</sup>

Recent studies of politics in the first half of the 18th century have established that earlier historians erred in attributing the decline of party to the 1720s, partly because they assumed that the Tory party and Jacobitism had to all intent disintegrated by those years. Dr. Eveline Cruikshanks has shown that the Tory party remained intact and became a Jacobite party because of the prescription of its members after the Whig triumph of 1715.<sup>(31)</sup> Dr. Clark has argued that the Whig party also

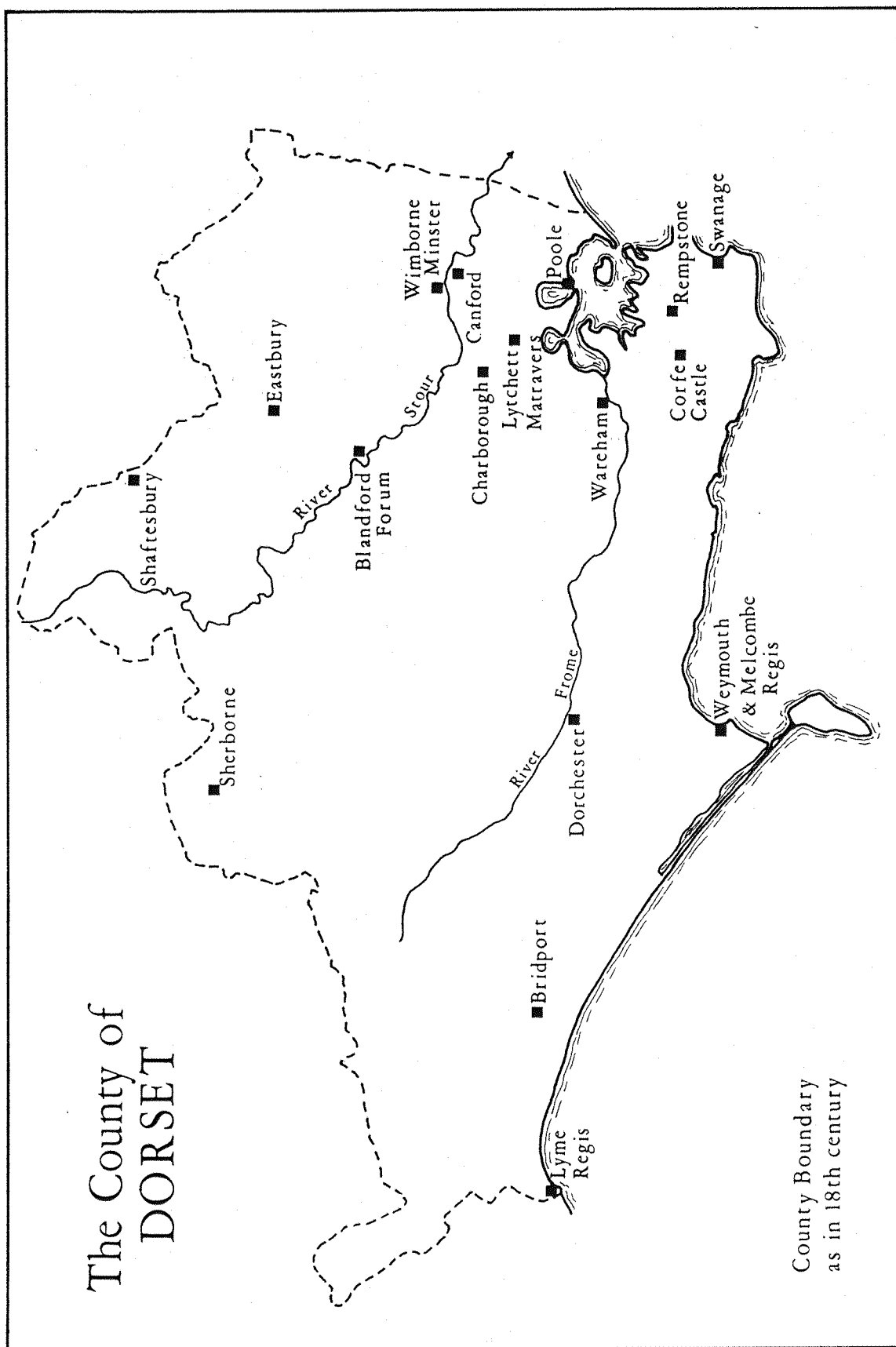
retained its essential identity as the supporters of the Hanoverian Succession despite the sub-divisions within it between the Old Corps and dissident factions. He sees the decline of parties as occurring in the 1750s.<sup>(32)</sup>

The Tories were predominant amongst the Dorset gentry. Only once in the 18th century (in the 1727 by-election) did the county fail to return Tory representatives.<sup>(33)</sup> As elsewhere, the party retained its unity, for very few Dorset Tories went over to the Whigs.<sup>(34)</sup> The Jacobites counted on leading Dorset landowners as potential supporters of a Stuart Restoration. Five of them including both the county members, were so listed in 1721,<sup>(35)</sup> and in 1743 the two county members, two more Tory landowners and two opposition Whigs were said to favour the return of the Stuarts.<sup>(36)</sup>

In contrast, the Whigs in Dorset suffered a great deal from the divisions within their party - so much so that it was claimed in 1749-50 that the Tories could be beaten in the county if the Whigs could reunite.<sup>(37)</sup> Henry Drax (?1693-1755), an associate of the Prince of Wales, who became his Secretary in 1744, began to oppose the administration after 1730.<sup>(38)</sup> Lord Coventry, a supporter of Sunderland, used his influence in Bridport against Walpole.<sup>(39)</sup> In the last years of Walpole's Ministry, Lord Shaftesbury joined the opposition Whigs and in 1740 George Bubb Dodington of Eastbury went into opposition after his dismissal by Walpole.<sup>(40)</sup>

In spite of these disagreements amongst the Whigs, in the earlier years of his administration Walpole and his colleagues had made good use of government influence in the boroughs of Dorset to secure the return of supporters of the administration. In the ports of Lyme Regis, Weymouth and Melcombe Regis and Poole the customs establishments were used to build up government electoral interests.<sup>(41)</sup> Elsewhere the administration enjoyed less direct influence, relying on its relationship with the gentry who possessed influence of their own in boroughs. Thus Walpole was able to make use of the Bond influence in Corfe Castle through Denis Bond (1676-1747), the King's letter carrier.<sup>(42)</sup> As a result, before Dodington's dismissal, the government could rely on the support of twelve of the twenty members elected for Dorset. Of the remaining eight, five were Tories and three opposition Whigs.<sup>(43)</sup>

The movement of parliamentary and public opinion against Walpole's administration and its methods which took place after 1736<sup>(44)</sup> affected many of the Dorset landowners and, as in the Commons, this brought some



local attempts to secure co-operation against the government between the disaffected Whigs and the Tories.<sup>(45)</sup> In 1740 Newcastle was told that the Whigs and Tories in Dorset "notwithstanding all former dissension are united together as one man and raising all the opposition they can to the present administration, and the Whigs are even more violent in the new scheme than the Tories themselves".<sup>(46)</sup> After Walpole's fall, the County Sheriff and Grand Jury were to adopt an address supporting the doctrine of 'Broad Bottom'. They insisted on the need for "a happy coalition and extinction of parties", measures to limit the "reach and influence of ministers" and for "fixing the freedom and independence of elections upon a more secure footing".<sup>(47)</sup>

Despite the apparent strength of Whig and Tory feelings against Walpole, the general election in Dorset was however, as elsewhere, "very far from a landslide".<sup>(48)</sup> The administration lost four seats to the opposition Whigs. Two of these in Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, where Dodington had a personal interest, were carried by his associates, one was lost in Shaftesbury to the influence of Lord Shaftesbury, and one in Bridport as a result of Coventry's hostility.<sup>(49)</sup> Elsewhere in the county government influence ensured that the administration retained eight seats.

The Borough of Poole was only a few miles by water across Poole Harbour from Corfe Castle and Wareham but it was to an extent distinguished from the rest of Dorset by its geographical, economic and political situation. It lay at the eastern extremity of the county in a semi-isolated position on its peninsula, backed by miles of inhospitable heathland and flanked by extensive mudlands. The neck of the peninsula was "not above 30 or 40 yards broad at high water"<sup>(50)</sup> and had been cut by a defensive dyke and hedged with fortifications from the 15th century until the Restoration.<sup>(51)</sup> The road system from Poole linked the town with Salisbury more effectively than with the rest of Dorset. Communications with part of the county at this time depended very much on the passage boats to Swanage, Wytch (for Corfe Castle) and Wareham, and they were subject to the vagaries of the weather.<sup>(52)</sup>

Poole was remarkable too for its important foreign, colonial and domestic trade which made it the busiest and most populous community in Dorset.<sup>(53)</sup> In common with most of the ports in the south-west, Poole had entered the Newfoundland fisheries in the 16th century,<sup>(54)</sup> but unlike most of the other ports, it had followed this commerce continuously and it had become the port's staple trade.<sup>(55)</sup> By the beginning of the 18th century it had attracted this trade from Weymouth.<sup>(56)</sup>



Lyme Regis too lost its share of the trade in the 1720s.<sup>(57)</sup> Poole was thus well-placed to take advantage of the marked increase in the Newfoundland trade which took place in the late 1720s, as the depression caused by the wars against Louis XIV and the poor fishing catches receded.<sup>(58)</sup> When the fishery entered a long period of more or less uninterrupted prosperity from the mid 18th century to the early 19th century, Poole was able to overtake Dartmouth, its principal rival, and become the leading British port in the Newfoundland trade.<sup>(59)</sup>

This commerce was in part a triangular trade. In the spring the Poole merchants sent men, provisions and equipment to Newfoundland, where the settled and temporary population were dependent on the merchants for employment and supplies of all necessities.<sup>(60)</sup> At the end of the fishing season, their ships left the island with the bulk of the processed codfish for ports in Portugal, Spain and Italy, from which they returned with cargoes of salt, fruit, wines, olive oil, silks and ironwork.<sup>(61)</sup> However, ships carrying train oil, seal skins, furs and timber frequently returned directly to Poole from Newfoundland.<sup>(62)</sup>

Important trade links existed also between Poole and North American and West Indies colonies. These were in part off-shoots from the connection with Newfoundland. For example, 'refuse', or inferior fish was carried to the West Indies for the use of slaves and exchanged for cargoes of coffee, sugar and rum.<sup>(63)</sup> But the trade between Poole and the colonies was also conducted separately. In particular, the early 18th century saw a growth in trade with South Carolina where general merchandize and slaves were exchanged for rice, pitch, tar and indigo.<sup>(64)</sup>

Partly to supply the needs of its transatlantic trade, Poole was also engaged in trade with ports in northern Europe, such as Bergen, Danzig, Hamburg and Rotterdam.<sup>(65)</sup> Its importance in the coasting trade also depended partly on the requirements of the commercial connections with Newfoundland and North America. Thus salt was obtained from Lymington and Newcastle, corn from Chichester and miscellaneous goods from London. The port was also important in the consignment of pipe-clay and stone from the nearby Isle of Purbeck and, to a lesser extent, of farm produce from Dorset.<sup>(66)</sup> By 1736 there were 144 ships belonging to Poole.<sup>(67)</sup>

The hinterland of Dorset and Hampshire was partly dependent on the prosperity of Poole because the merchants there drew on it for their labour force.<sup>(68)</sup> Supplies of rigging and nets,<sup>(69)</sup> ship's biscuits<sup>(70)</sup> and

the 'swanskin' cloth for the outfits of their crews and fishermen<sup>(71)</sup> were also obtained from this area. A great deal of Dorset's industry was thus concerned with Poole, and with the Newfoundland trade especially.

Poole was also distinguished from the other boroughs in Dorset by its extensive municipal rights. A charter of 1568, confirmed by subsequent charters, had granted Poole county corporate status<sup>(72)</sup> and thus separated it from the county of Dorset, except for three official links. One of these was the authority of the Lord Lieutenant, who was appointed Lieutenant of the town as well as of the county.<sup>(73)</sup> Poole also appeared in the titles of Vice Admirals of Dorset and Poole.<sup>(74)</sup> The other link was the right of Poole freeholders to vote in county elections.<sup>(75)</sup>

The Borough possessed a large measure of freedom in ecclesiastical law as well. The Parish of St. James, which was coterminous with the town's boundaries, had become a Royal Peculiar at the Reformation and was thus exempt from episcopal jurisdiction.<sup>(76)</sup> Instead, it was subject to an Official appointed by the Lord of the Manor of Canford, to which Poole belonged. He frequently chose the Vicar of Canford Magna to fill this office.<sup>(77)</sup> The Official's jurisdiction was apparently not very effective or irksome, partly because the Lordship of the Manor belonged to the Webbs of Canford, a leading recusant family with little or no interest in the Established Church.<sup>(78)</sup> In practice, the Corporation came to acquire considerable freedom in disposing the affairs of St. James Church. In 1650 twelve feoffees had obtained the advowson, rectory and church in trust for the Corporation, and the Corporation claimed the right to elect the ministers of St. James.<sup>(79)</sup>

Presbyterian and Independent doctrines attracted many followers in the town during the Civil Wars and Interregnum. Despite the purge of the Corporation in 1662, its members continued to support non-conformity.<sup>(80)</sup> In 1667 they chose a strongly nonconformist minister, Samuel Hardy, who enraged much of county society and was ousted by Royal Commission in 1682 after a complaint from the Dorset Grand Jury.<sup>(81)</sup>

This was one aspect of the conflict which arose between the Borough and the county in the period of Tory reaction in Charles II's reign. The Borough's extensive rights, its strong support of Parliament in the Civil Wars<sup>(82)</sup> and its notoriety for radical religious and political views were naturally anathema to the predominantly Tory country gentlemen of Dorset.<sup>(83)</sup>

The Dorset Grand Jury condemned Poole in 1681 not only for sheltering debtors behind its privileges as a county, but as a grave political danger, because of "the great number of townsmen all known to be obstinate opposers of His Majesty's government".<sup>(84)</sup> A Poole Tory complained in 1683 that "the people there have so long lived with immunity from the laws by reason of their being a county ... that they look upon themselves as a Hanse town and are resolved to defend themselves to the last".<sup>(85)</sup> Hardy's ejectment was followed by quo warranto proceedings in 1683 and the Borough's charter was lost in 1684.<sup>(86)</sup> Until its privileges were fully restored in December 1688 the Borough was governed by a commission of Dorset gentry, and the Lord of the Manor of Canford had some limited success in reimposing the authority of the court leet.<sup>(87)</sup>

As happened generally in municipal government, Poole had fallen in the 17th century under the control of a select Corporation, whose co-opted members had deprived the ratepaying householders of their ancient rights.<sup>(88)</sup> The parliamentary franchise thus came to be enjoyed exclusively by the burgesses, the members of the Corporation, both resident and non-resident.<sup>(89)</sup> The issue re-emerged only briefly in 1688 when the Commons confirmed the right of the burgesses,<sup>(90)</sup> in accordance with their general practice at that time.<sup>(91)</sup> Despite the interregnum it suffered between 1684 and 1688, Poole Corporation did not thus experience in full the serious constitutional crises which divided many corporations where two franchises, or even two charters, were disputed in the period 1680-1720.<sup>(92)</sup>

The burgesses normally numbered less than 100 in the early 18th century. In 1697 there had been 85, of whom 30 were non-resident,<sup>(93)</sup> and in 1740-1 there were 78 of whom 21 were non-resident.<sup>(94)</sup> The resident burgesses were mainly merchants or 'mariners', as might be expected, and the Corporation was dominated by a mercantile oligarchy like London and the other commercial centres.<sup>(95)</sup> Numerous family groups existed amongst the burgesses because it was natural for relatives of existing members to be co-opted when opportunity arose. For example, three representatives of each of the merchant families of Durell, Lester, Wadham and Weston can be identified amongst the burgesses at Corporation meetings between August 1702 and November 1706.<sup>(96)</sup> Many of the so-called 'mariners' elected to the Corporation were members of established families, who customarily served their time at sea or in Newfoundland before emerging as merchants in their own right or succeeding to the control of the family business.<sup>(97)</sup> Thus, of twelve 'mariners' admitted

in 1719 at least six belonged to existing merchant families.<sup>(98)</sup> Humbler individuals like craftsmen and tradesmen were also elected to the Corporation but in smaller numbers. A baker, a shopkeeper and an inn-keeper were admitted in 1719; five of the nineteen new members created in 1742 were tradesmen or craftsmen.<sup>(99)</sup> Since these men were largely dependent on the merchants for their livelihood their presence amongst the burgesses in relatively small numbers offered no threat to the mercantile oligarchy.

The non-resident burgesses were frequently those individuals whom the Corporation honoured for what they had achieved for the town, or for the benefits it was hoped they would bring to it.<sup>(100)</sup> It was customary to admit as burgesses those who were elected as M.P.s for the Borough.<sup>(101)</sup> This contributed to the large number of local country gentry amongst the non-resident burgesses - in 1740-1, eleven of the twenty-one non-resident members belonged to this category.<sup>(102)</sup> The remainder were relatives of resident burgesses, who lived away from the town.

Until nearly the end of the 17th century the Corporation had invariably chosen local landed men as the town's representatives in Parliament. Thus the Erle family of Charborough, some ten miles from Poole, and the Trenchards of Bloxworth and Lychett Matravers, also not far from the town, had provided the Borough's members in twelve 17th century Parliaments.<sup>(103)</sup> In 1698, however, the Corporation broke with this precedent and began to elect merchants, drawn from their own ranks, or with strong local connections. For example, Sir William Phippard, a Poole merchant with interests in London, was elected in each Parliament but one between 1698 and 1710.<sup>(104)</sup> Sir William Lewen, the brother of a Poole merchant, and Lord Mayor of London 1717-8, sat for the Borough 1708-10 and from 1711 until his death in 1722.<sup>(105)</sup>

This reliance on the landed interest in the 17th century and the departure made in 1698 was the reverse of the practice followed by most commercial centres where merchants began to be replaced as parliamentary representatives by landowners in the late 17th century.<sup>(106)</sup> The explanation may be found in the state of the port's trade. During much of the 17th century Poole's overseas trade was depressed<sup>(107)</sup> and it is understandable that the town's merchants, lacking funds and self-confidence, should have deferred to local families. Until the Revolution of 1688 the patronage of leading Whigs such as the Erles and Trenchards<sup>(108)</sup> was also attractive in providing some protection for the Borough against the Toryism of the majority of the county landowners. 1698 marks a turning point in the electoral history of the town because the French War had by

this time brought the Newfoundland trade to the point of collapse.<sup>(109)</sup> Coincidentally, the death of Sir John Trenchard, one of the sitting members, left his son a minor and Antony Ashley-Cooper, the other member, decided to retire from Parliament in 1698.<sup>(110)</sup> The Poole merchants thus took this opportunity to seek more direct access to Parliament through local men of proven commercial experience to try to obtain remedies for the parlous state of the Newfoundland trade. They had some success. The 'Newfoundland Act' of 1699 reinforced the rights of the West Country merchants in the trade and the principal settlement, St. Johns, was fortified in 1701.<sup>(111)</sup>

From a wider perspective, this preference for commercial men as representatives may be seen also as the result of some realisation of the transformation in business, and the new importance of 'businessmen', which the wars and the financial innovations of the time were bringing between 1688 and 1714.<sup>(112)</sup> As the monied interest emerged it would seem natural that the town's interests should be served by men like Phippard and Lewen who had knowledge of and influence in the City.

The departure made in 1698 was not followed through completely however, and in the early 18th century the members chosen began to approximate more closely to those preferred by most commercial centres - substantial landowners and/or placemen, representatives who would be better able to obtain from an expanding government adequate shares of patronage and favours.<sup>(113)</sup>

Thomas Ridge,<sup>(114)</sup> the Queen's Cooper at Portsmouth was elected for Poole in 1708 and 1710, serving until his expulsion from the Commons by the Tories for alleged fraud in his contract to supply beer to the fleet. After the Whig triumph in 1715 Ridge was given more contracts and was re-elected for Poole in 1722, when he defeated the Tory nephew of Sir William Lewen.<sup>(115)</sup> Ridge himself was in turn defeated in 1727 by another placeman, Denis Bond of the landowning family at Creech in the nearby Isle of Purbeck.<sup>(116)</sup> The other Poole seat was held from 1713 by George Trenchard, the son of Sir John Trenchard.<sup>(117)</sup> Although he was not himself a placeman, his brother-in-law, John Bromfield became a Commissioner in the Office for Taxes in 1724.<sup>(118)</sup>

Both Trenchard and Bond were local landowners with strong links with Poole and did not owe their success in elections wholly to their connections with government, but the rising influence of the administration over the town in the late 17th and early 18th centuries was the most significant feature of its electoral history at this time. It was

at first a general influence based on the dependence of the merchants on government support for their trade, especially with Newfoundland. There were however two powerful cross-currents affecting the electoral behaviour of the Corporation which make it difficult to estimate the precise strength of the government influence while it remained of a general nature.

The Newfoundland trade was highly regarded in England. Since the early 17th century it had been viewed as a 'nursery of seamen' and thus valuable to the nation's maritime and naval power.<sup>(119)</sup> It also resulted in a favourable balance of trade in the returns of goods and specie from its Mediterranean outlets.<sup>(120)</sup> Since 1660 the government had been brought to appreciate the need to interest itself in its regulation and protection.<sup>(121)</sup> As a result, English sovereignty had been asserted over Newfoundland and its fishing grounds by the Act of 1699. This was repeated in the peace treaty of 1713, with the provision of fishing rights for the French.<sup>(122)</sup> The government also recognised the rights of those engaged in the Newfoundland trade, initially through the Western Charters 1634-1676.<sup>(123)</sup> These rights were incorporated in the 'Newfoundland Act' of 1699, with the additional provision of a naval escort for the Newfoundland fleet in peace and war.<sup>(124)</sup> Since the island was not regarded as a colony<sup>(125)</sup> the masters of fishing ships were almost wholly responsible for the administration of the fishery as 'Fishing Admirals'.<sup>(126)</sup> By 1729 however the need to provide for more effective control of Newfoundland resulted in the appointment of the naval Commodore of the annual convoy as governor of the island. He appointed 'winter justices', magistrates to administer criminal law during the winter months outside the fishing seasons.<sup>(127)</sup>

The Newfoundland merchants in Poole in the late 17th and early 18th centuries thus naturally looked to government to maintain their interest in the trade. It should not be assumed, however, that as members of Poole Corporation they were always willing to support the administration's candidates with their votes, as a matter of course. The Newfoundland, and other Poole merchants engaged in overseas trade, recognised their ultimate dependence on government for the protection of their trade but when government appeared to neglect their interests the merchants were willing to show independence in their voting behaviour. The return of Lewen, a Hanoverian Tory, in the 1708 general election, when the Whigs were generally victorious in the country,<sup>(128)</sup> may well have come in part from the discontent of the merchants over the continued military success of the French in Newfoundland during the War of Spanish Succession.<sup>(129)</sup>

One further cross-current of opinion affected elections in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Because of its record of support for Parliament and Dissent in the 17th century, and latterly its treatment at the hands of the Tories, the Corporation was predisposed to support Whig candidates, without regard for the political complexion of the government of the day. This preference was powerfully reinforced by the influence enjoyed by the Erle and Trenchard families. Thus, two Whig members were returned from 1698 until 1708 when Lewen was first elected.

After 1715 government influence in Poole, as in other boroughs, took on a more definitive and effective form as Walpole ruthlessly exploited the greatly increased amount of government patronage available.<sup>(130)</sup> The Customs and Excise establishment in the port was used to create a body of placemen amongst the electors. Poole was the principal and only customs port in Dorset, Lyme Regis, Weymouth and Melcombe Regis being 'members' of Poole, while other harbours such as Bridport and Swanage were merely 'creeks' belonging to Poole or one of the three 'members'.<sup>(131)</sup> By 1720 the establishment of customs officers in Poole totalled 14 men, and 4 of them were resident burgesses, or members of burgess families.<sup>(132)</sup> As trade grew, the establishment was increased by 2 in 1733<sup>(133)</sup> and 6 customs officers were amongst the 10 placemen counted in the Corporation in 1738.<sup>(134)</sup> By 1740-1 there were 8 customs officers in the total of 14 placemen amongst the 57 resident members of the Corporation.<sup>(135)</sup>

The customs officers in the Corporation included the Surveyor (Timothy Spurrier, appointed during his second mayoralty in 1730), the "Commander of the Vessel for the lodgement of customs officers" (a former Mayor, Alderman John Phippard) and four waiters and searchers. The other placemen in the Corporation enjoyed Revenue posts. For example, Benjamin Skutt, Mayor in 1726 and 1727, was appointed Distributor of Stamps, after serving as the Surveyor of Customs.<sup>(136)</sup>

The period 1715-1740 therefore saw the rise of a substantial government electoral interest in Poole. Without doubt one of those latterly responsible for this development was George Bubb Dodington, a Treasury Lord from 1724 to 1740.<sup>(137)</sup> Dodington succeeded to his uncle's estate at Eastbury, then about three and a half hours by coach from Poole, in 1720.<sup>(138)</sup> He first showed an interest in Poole in 1730 when he became a burgess.<sup>(139)</sup> He already enjoyed electoral interests in three boroughs, including Weymouth and Melcombe Regis,<sup>(140)</sup> and clearly wished to use government influence to help establish a personal interest in

Poole, as he did in Weymouth. In 1732, when Bond was expelled from the Commons for his part in the Derwentwater scandal,<sup>(141)</sup> Dodington secured the vacant Poole seat for his cousin, Thomas Wyndham, without a contest.<sup>(142)</sup> Dodington intervened personally to favour the burgesses of Poole. Francis Edwards owed his appointment as a customs landwaiter in 1733 to "the recommendation of Mr Dodington".<sup>(143)</sup> In the Commons, Dodington also tried to further the interests of Poole merchants in the West Indies trade.<sup>(144)</sup>

George Trenchard continued to occupy the other Poole seat. As a nearby landowner, whose father had represented the town, his interest in the Borough was more personal than Dodington's. It depended in part on a group of his relatives amongst the burgesses, estimated in 1747 to number nearly twenty individuals.<sup>(145)</sup> But Trenchard was on good terms with Wyndham and Dodington and enjoyed the support of the government interest as well.<sup>(146)</sup>

Both Trenchard and Wyndham were dependable supporters of the administration but the Excise Bill caused Trenchard to falter in his loyalty to Walpole.<sup>(147)</sup> He voted for the introduction of the Bill but abstained in the subsequent division in April 1733.<sup>(148)</sup> No direct evidence of the reaction of Poole Corporation to the Excise proposal has been traced but it can be assumed that the merchants of the port (who had some interests in the wine and tobacco trade) were opposed to the measure, in common with the rest of the business community.<sup>(149)</sup> Because Trenchard was closer to the electors of Poole than Wyndham he evidently found it necessary to demonstrate his sympathy with them by abstaining. Wyndham, like Dodington, supported Walpole throughout the crisis.<sup>(150)</sup>

However, there is no indication that the election of May 1734, which was generally hard fought,<sup>(151)</sup> aroused any related controversy in Poole. Trenchard and Wyndham were returned without apparent opposition. Trenchard had quickly returned to supporting Walpole on the Septennial Act in March 1734,<sup>(152)</sup> and it was hardly likely that the administration, which was engaged in heated battles in many other constituencies would have thought it worthwhile to oppose Trenchard in Poole. Such opposition to government that had arisen in the Corporation was also presumably satisfied for the time being by Trenchard's conduct over the Excise Bill, as happened in other boroughs where the sitting members had abstained on the measure.<sup>(153)</sup>



Trenchard and Wyndham continued to support Walpole with their votes up to February 1740 at least,<sup>(154)</sup> but at the general election of May 1741 the two men lost their seats to two supporters of Walpole's administration, Joseph Gulston (Senior), and Thomas Missing, both merchants connected with Poole's trading interests.<sup>(155)</sup>

This change was the direct result of Dodington's departure from the Treasury into open opposition to Walpole in October 1740. Relations between Walpole and Dodington had finally broken over the former's attempts to destroy Dodington's influence in Weymouth and Melcombe Regis.<sup>(156)</sup> Wyndham was too close to his cousin to be left undisturbed in Poole when Walpole was determined to win every possible seat in the 1741 election to try to save his ministry. In Poole, as elsewhere, the government applied strong pressure on the electors to secure the return of loyal supporters.<sup>(157)</sup> Alderman Skutt, having allegedly disdained a bribe of £500 from government, was dismissed from his Revenue place for refusing to obey the orders of the administration in the mayoral election of 1740.<sup>(158)</sup> The Corporation was eventually prevailed upon to desert Wyndham, and because Trenchard apparently refused to do the same, it reluctantly agreed that he too should lose his seat.<sup>(159)</sup>

The election did not proceed to a poll but a forecast of the likely result of a poll, which may be dated between September 1740 and May 1741,<sup>(160)</sup> shows that the struggle in the Borough was closer than might have been assumed from the extent of government influence in the Corporation. The burgesses were almost equally divided between Trenchard and Wyndham and their opponents.<sup>(161)</sup> All but 4 of the 21 non-resident voters, who included many country gentry, were expected to support Trenchard and Wyndham, an indication of the strength of their hostility to Walpole's regime, but it was also anticipated that as many as 22 of the 57 resident voters, including 4 of the 14 placemen, would vote for them. Thus, while the eventual result of this election demonstrated the effectiveness of the administration's influence in Poole in sweeping aside Trenchard's interest and Dodington's attempt to retain the government interest for his own use, the episode also reveals the existence of a considerable measure of opposition to the administration within the town.

The Corporation did not discriminate between Trenchard and Wyndham. Each man was expected to receive virtually identical votes. It is thus clear that the opposition to the administration's wishes was motivated by much more than personal regard for Trenchard from his many relatives in the Corporation. It was opposition on a broader base, strong enough to cause likely defections amongst the placemen, despite the example made of Alderman Skutt.

Opposition to the government in the Corporation had existed before the controversy arose over the 1741 election. The mayoral election of 1738 was regarded as a contest between the candidate favoured by the administration, and supported by the placemen, and a candidate supported by opposing burgesses. The supporters of the administration candidate won by 27 votes to 22.<sup>(162)</sup>

While no direct evidence has been found of the reasons for this hostility to government it is likely that it was in part a reflection of general discontent with government commercial policy which had grown in the business community as a result of the Excise crisis and was exploited by Walpole's opponents from late in 1737.<sup>(163)</sup>

The Poole merchants did not join in the petitions organised by the opposition against the depredations of the Spanish coastguards in 1738 but a minority of them had reasons for resenting government actions at this time. Some of the Newfoundland merchants were still unwilling to accept the 'winter justices' in Newfoundland, fearing that these new appointments would damage their own traditional privileges as 'Fishing Admirals' in the island. In particular, they were hostile to William Keen, a leading advocate of this extension of civil government in Newfoundland.<sup>(164)</sup> Later, the outbreak of war with Spain brought new problems, which some of those affected could see as grievances against Walpole's ministry - the closing of the Spanish market and the inadequacy of naval protection against Spanish privateers, who captured six Poole ships between November 1740 and October 1741.<sup>(165)</sup>

In addition to this dissatisfaction with the administration it is likely that some of the opposition reflected personal rivalries in the Corporation and competition for patronage. No direct evidence for this exists but it would have been a natural development in a small group of individuals and the fact that the composition of the group of burgesses "in opposition" in 1738 and 1740-1 is only partly identical provides some support for this suggestion.<sup>(166)</sup>

However, the majority of the members of the Corporation ultimately preferred to conform to the wishes of government in 1741 in the hope that it would protect their trading interests in the war, and provide individual rewards in the form of patronage. They received some satisfaction. Their petition for the defence of Newfoundland resulted in the re-fortification of St. Johns,<sup>(167)</sup> and the government facilitated some diversification of their trade to Nova Scotia, South Carolina and the

Mediterranean, which gave a measure of compensation for the closing of the Spanish market and the continued loss of ships to Spanish, and later, French privateers.<sup>(168)</sup>

Moreover, both Gulston and Missing were attractive candidates to many of the Corporation in Poole because of their mercantile interests, their wealth and their standing with government. Missing provided £500 for the building of the workhouse in 1739-40,<sup>(169)</sup> and both members were to give financial help to the hard-pressed Corporation later in the 1740s.<sup>(170)</sup> Some Poole merchants already had trade connections with Missing's associates in Portsmouth and were able to obtain a share in a government contract to supply cable and cordage to the dockyard there in 1744.<sup>(171)</sup> Conforming with the administration's wishes in the 1741 election thus brought real advantages to the Corporation.

In 1741 then, the Borough and County of the Town of Poole was distinct from the county of Dorset because of its geographical position, the nature and scale of its economic activity, and its privileges of municipal government. However, as the town's prosperity increased, the economic links between the port and its hinterland were bound to become more important and its isolation in real terms to diminish.

Political and economic considerations had meant that the town's status as a county in its own right had not yet developed quite the high degree of corporate pride and independence amongst the members of the Corporation which might otherwise be expected to exist. Poole therefore remained open to the political and social influence of some of the neighbouring country gentry. Nevertheless, the election of 1741 demonstrated clearly that the electoral influence of government had now become more powerful than that of local landowners. While hostility to Walpole amongst the majority of Dorset landowners carried four parliamentary seats against him, the opposition in Poole was overwhelmed by government influence.

Government influence over the electors of Poole Corporation had been growing since the late 17th century. A majority of the Corporation was pre-disposed to accept it. However, they did so, not in a completely supine manner. As merchants and practical men, they recognised the advantages the administration could provide for their trade in general, and the individual benefits of places and contracts. In the late 1730s and early 1740s a minority of the Corporation was willing to challenge the acceptance of the influence of government, very much because they

resented the adverse effects of government action on their trading interests. There were thus already some indications that the constituency would show a degree of independence in its behaviour if the administration failed to satisfy the needs of the merchants who dominated the Corporation.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER ONE

1. Victoria County History of Dorset, (2 vols., 1908-68), Vol.II, pp. 256, 282.
2. Ibid, Vol.II, pp. 326-7.
3. Alan Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in Joan Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales, (2 vols., Cambridge, 1967), Vol.IV, 1500-1640, pp. 471-2, 497, 589-92.
4. F.C. Warren, 'Dorset Industries in the Past', Proc., D.N.H.A.S., Vol.LIX, (1937), pp. 32-46; Victoria County History, Vol.II, op. cit., pp. 328-9.
5. Janice Pahl, 'The Rope and Net Industries of Bridport. Some Aspects of its History and Geography', Proc., D.N.H.A.S., Vol.LXXXII, (1960), pp. 143-156.
6. Victoria County History, op. cit., p. 220.
7. G.J. Davies, 'England and Newfoundland: Policy and Trade 1660-1783', University of Southampton, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1980, pp.296-9.
8. These were the 4th Earl of Shaftesbury (1711-1771) whose seat was at Wimborne St. Giles, and Lord Ilchester (1704-1776), the former Stephen Fox, who had a house at Melbury Sampford.
9. John Hutchins, The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset, (4 vols., 3rd edition 1861-70), Vol.II, pp. 593-8.
10. Ibid, Vol.III, pp. 565-7.
11. Dr. John Sparrow, A Survey of the Lulworth Castle Estate ... belonging to Edward Weld, Esq., D.C.R.O.
12. Isaac Taylor, Maps of the Estates of T. Erle Drax, 1773-76, (completed 1777), D.C.R.O.
13. MS. copy of 'Sir John Webb, an account of his lands, Commission of Forfeited Estates, 1715', inserted in Sir Peter Thompson's copy of Thomas Gerard's Survey of Dorsetshire, (1732), sold by Messrs. T.G. Lawrence of Crewkerne, 10th February, 1971.
14. Hutchins, op. cit, Vol.II, p. 598.
15. Ibid, Vol.II, pp. 298, 544.
16. Ibid, Vol.I, pp. 400-1; Vol.II, p. 566.
17. Sherborne Mercury, 3rd August, 1742.
18. Ibid, 7th August, 1749.
19. S.J., 18th June, 1753.
20. Sir Lewis Namier, The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III, (2nd edition, 1957), p. 70.

21. S.J., 5th March, 30th April, 18th June, 1750.
22. William Chafin, Anecdotes and History of Cranborne Chase, (2nd Edition, 1886), pp. 10-15.
23. S.J., 28th May, 1750.
24. Hutchins, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 600-5; Vol.III, pp. 239-41; Romney Sedgewick, ed., The History of Parliament, the House of Commons, 1715-54, (2 vols., 1970), Vol.I, pp. 232-3, 432-3, 470-1.
25. Hutchins, op. cit., Vol.III, pp. 499-505; Vol.IV, pp. 90-1; Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 237-8, 540, 621-2.
26. Hutchins, op. cit., Vol.III, pp. 325-31; Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 235-6; Vol.II, p. 480.
27. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 231-2.
28. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 236-7.
29. Hutchins, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 366; Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 480.
30. A.H. Newman, ed., 'Leicester House Politics 1750-1760, from the papers of John, second Earl of Egmont', Camden Miscellany, XXIII, Fourth Series, Vol.7, (1969), pp. 85-228.
31. Eveline Cruikshanks, Political Untouchables, The Tories and the '45, (1979), pp. 1, 4-6, 16-17.
32. J.C.D. Clark, 'The Decline of Party 1740-1760', E.H.R., Vol.XCIII, (1978), pp. 499-527.
33. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 231.
34. Ibid, Vol.I, p. 80; Vol.II, pp. 48-9.
35. Ibid, Vol.I, p. 110.
36. Cruikshanks, op. cit., pp. 117, 127.
37. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 231.
38. Ibid, Vol.I, pp. 621-2.
39. J.H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, the King's Minister, (1960), p. 277; Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 231-2.
40. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 238-9, 500-3.
41. Ibid, Vol.I, pp. 234-6, 238-9.
42. Ibid, Vol.I, pp. 232-3, 470-1.
43. Supporters of the administration sat for: Bridport (1 seat), Corfe Castle (1 seat), Lyme Regis, Poole, Shaftesbury and Weymouth and Melcombe Regis (4 seats). Dissident Whigs sat for Bridport (1 seat), Dorchester (1 seat) and Wareham (1 seat). The two county seats and the remaining seats in Corfe Castle, Dorchester and Wareham were occupied by Tories. (Calculations based on Sedgewick, op. cit.).
44. H.T. Dickinson, Walpole and the Whig Supremacy, (1973), pp.177-182.

45. J.B. Owen, The Rise of the Pelhams, (Reprint, 1971), pp. 3-4; Cruikshanks, op. cit., pp. 26-27.
46. B.L. Add. MSS. 32695 (Newcastle Papers), f. 205, P. Walter to Newcastle, 6th October, 1740.
47. Sherborne Mercury, 17th August, 1742.
48. Owen, op. cit., p. 7.
49. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 231-2, 236-9, 518; Vol.II, p. 20. (The list of this Parliament in the Hardwicke papers optimistically counted ten members for and ten members against the administration. B.L. Add. MSS. 35, 876, ff. 138-9).
50. J.J. Cartwright, ed., 'Dr. Richard Pococke's Travels through England', Camden Society, New Series, XLII, (1888), Vol.I, pp. 86-7.
51. J. Sydenham, The History of the Town and County of Poole, (Poole, 1839), pp. 94, 131.
52. Joseph Moore, The History of the Town and County of Poole compiled from Hutchin's History of the County of Dorset, (Poole, 1788), p. 79; Cartwright, op. cit., p. 88.
53. Hutchins, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 365.
54. Gillian T. Cell, English Enterprise in Newfoundland 1577-1660, (University of Toronto, 1969), pp. 3, 5-6; P.B.A., 51(6), Town Accounts 1551, f.1, 4th March, 1551.
55. K. Matthews, Lecture to the Society of Poole Men, 17th March, 1981; Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 395-6.
56. Victoria County History, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 222.
57. Davies, op. cit., pp. 296-8.
58. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery (chiefly in the 17th and 18th centuries)', Oxford University, unpublished D.Phil. thesis, 1968, pp. 182, 306-7.
59. K. Matthews, Lectures on the History of Newfoundland 1500-1830, (Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1973), pp. 165-6; W. Gordon Handcock, 'The West Country Migrations to Newfoundland', Bulletin of Canadian Studies, Vol.V, No.1, (April 1981), pp. 5-24.
60. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery', pp. 18, 20; A.C. Wardle, 'The Newfoundland Trade', in C. Northcote Parkinson, ed., The Trade Winds, (1939), pp. 227-8.
61. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery', p. 17; Wardle, op. cit., pp. 231-2.
62. Benjamin Lester, a leading Poole merchant in the Newfoundland trade, recorded these items arriving at Poole in his vessels. For example, Benjamin Lester's Diary, 31st July, 1793, the cargo of the Bingley, D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 9.

63. Ibid, 4th June, 1767; 20th October, 1769, D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 3.
64. The Daily Post, 29th November, 11th, 24th December, 1740; P.M. Hamer, G.C. Rogers, Maud E. Lyles, eds., The Papers of Henry Laurens, (6 vols., 1968-78, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia), Vol.I, pp. 27, 37, 62, 116, 128, 137, 315, 318, 320, 322, 324.
65. S.J., 4th June, 1750, 26th August, 1751.
66. T. S. Willan, The English Coasting Trade, (Manchester, 1938), pp. 14, 45, 75, 109, 148-9, 155-7.
67. Moore, op. cit., pp. 39-40.
68. Handcock, op. cit., pp. 18-21. (Documents of the Poole Court of Record provide evidence of this practice. See, for example, P.B.A., S. 1316, 20th April, 1763; S. 1439, 9th November 1767).
69. Pahl, op. cit., pp. 150-1.
70. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 6, Isaac Lester's Diary, 18th June 1775.
71. Victoria County History, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 361.
72. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 179-184. Poole was one of 17 boroughs which enjoyed this status.
73. Ibid, p. 184, note.
74. Hutchins, op. cit., Introduction, p. lv.
75. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 181, note.
76. Ibid, pp. 291, 293.
77. Ibid, p. 301; S.J., 6th September, 1773.
78. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 57-8; J.A. Williams, 'Wiltshire Catholicism in the Early 18th Century: the Diocesan Returns of 1706', Recusant History, Vol.VII, No.5 (April 1964), pp. 249-62.
79. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 295-6, 303-6. (This claim was disputed by some of the surviving feoffees in 1703 and later by the ratepayers. See Chapter Two, pp. 45-6 below).
80. Ibid, pp. 197-9; W. Densham and J. Ogle, The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset from their Foundation to the Present Time, (Bournemouth, 1899), pp. 181-9.
81. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 306-7.
82. H.P. Smith, The History of the Borough and County of the Town of Poole, (2 vols., Poole, 1948-51), Vol.II, pp. 138-53.
83. D. Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II, (2 vols., Oxford, 1934), Vol.II, p. 634.
84. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 307.
85. Calendar of State Papers, Domestic. July-September, 1683, pp. 431-2, 29th September, 1683.



86. R.H. George, 'The Charters Granted to English Parliamentary Corporations in 1688', E.H.R., Vol.LV, (1940), pp. 47-56.
87. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 61, 209-14.
88. S. and B. Webb, English Local Government, The Manor and the Borough, (2 parts, 1908), Part One, p. 272; J.H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, the Making of a Statesman, (1956), pp. 50-1. (More recent research has raised many questions about the growth of oligarchy in the 16th and 17th centuries but accepts the basic thesis of its growth. See for example, Kevin Wilson, 'Political Organisation in the 16th Century Town', Unit 6, Open University Course A.322, English Urban History, 1500-1780, (1977), and Rosemary O'Day, 'The Triumph of Civic Oligarchy in the Seventeenth Century?', Unit 12, O.U. Course A.322).
89. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 193-7, 256-7.
90. Sylvester Douglas, The History of Cases of Controverted Elections tried and determined during the First Session of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great Britain, XL George III, (4 vols., 1775-7), Vol.II, pp. 226-9.
91. J.H. Plumb, The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725, (History Book Club Edition, 1968), p. 95.
92. Ibid, pp. 94-5 and note 1.
93. P.B.A., 170(A.9), List of the Burgesses of Poole, 1697.
94. P.B.A., Mathews Collection, MS. Forecast of Poll, attributed to 1740-1.
95. J.H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, the Making of a Statesman, op. cit., p. 25.
96. P.B.A., Corporation Record Book, 1702-1816, ff. 2, 4, 6, 8-9, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 32, 34.
97. For example, the Sherborne Mercury of 27th October, 1741, recording the death of John Durell, "while taking a glass with friends at the King's Arms", remarked that he had formerly been at sea and had become the owner of several vessels.
98. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., ff. 117, 120, 5th August, 2nd September, 1719.
99. Ibid, f. 252, 5th May, 1742.
100. Thus for example, in 1744, Captain John Wingfield of London, captain of the Southwell privateer of Bristol was admitted gratis "for his good service done lately to the trade of this Town in bringing in a French privateer". Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 270, 4th July, 1744.

101. B.L. Add. MSS., Cole MS. 5841, Sir Peter Thompson to Browne Willis (?), 2nd September, 1749.
102. Forecast of Poll, 1740-1, op. cit.
103. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 276-282.
104. Ibid, pp. 283-4 and note (w); Calendar of Acts of the Privy Council (Colonial), Vol.II, 1680-1720, p. 330, 16th March, 1699; p. 392, 18th March, 1702; pp. 659-60, 24th June, 1713.
105. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 284 and note (x); Sedgewick, op. cit., p.52.
106. J.H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, the Making of a Statesman, op. cit., p. 52.
107. W.B. Stephens, 'The Trade Fortunes of Poole, Weymouth and Lyme Regis, 1600-1640', Proc., D.N.H.A.S., Vol.95 (1973), pp. 71-3; W.B. Stephens, 'The West Country Ports and the Struggle for the Newfoundland Fisheries in the 17th Century', Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art, Vol.LXXXVIII, (1956), pp. 91-101.
108. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 282-3 and note (t).
109. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery', op. cit., pp. 242-5; Davies, op. cit., pp. 34-37.
110. Dictionary of National Biography, IV, Antony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, (1671-1715).
111. K. Matthews, Lectures on the History of Newfoundland, op. cit., pp. 117-8; Davies, op. cit., pp. 44-52.
112. G. Holmes, British Politics in the Age of Anne, (1967), Chapter 5, passim.
113. J.H. Plumb, Sir Robert Walpole, the Making of a Statesman, op. cit., p. 52.
114. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 383; N.W. Surry and J.H. Thomas, eds., Book of Original Entries, Portsmouth Record Series III, (1977), pp. xxiv-xxv.
115. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 214.
116. Ibid, Vol.I, pp. 470-1; J. Cannon, 'Polls Supplementary to the History of Parliament Volumes 1715-1790', B.I.H.R., Vol.XLVII, (1974), pp. 110-6.
117. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 284 and note (y).
118. W.E. Ward, 'The Office for Taxes 1665-1798', B.I.H.R., Vol.XXV, (1952), pp. 204-12; W.E. Ward, 'The English Revenue Commissioners, 1754-1798', E.H.R., Vol.LXX, (1955), pp. 25-54.
119. Davies, op. cit., pp. 25-6, 379-80; Matthews, thesis, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

120. Davies, op. cit., pp. 384-5; Matthews, thesis, op. cit., p. 3.
121. Davies, op. cit., p. 71.
122. Ibid, pp. 48, 67.
123. Ibid, pp. 6-26.
124. Ibid, pp. 46-7.
125. Professor Matthews emphasised that government was opposed to Newfoundland being accorded the status of a colony primarily because this would encourage settlement and prevent the fisheries from being training grounds for mariners who could be enlisted for the Royal Navy. (Matthews, thesis, op. cit., pp. 4-10). Dr. Davies argues that government was not consistently opposed to settlement in Newfoundland and that there was "no consistent and clear government policy towards Newfoundland" during the period of his study. (Davies, op. cit., pp. xi-xiv).
126. Davies, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
127. Ibid, pp. 74-105; Matthews, thesis, op. cit., pp. 327-334, 358.
128. Holmes, op. cit., p. 18.
129. Matthews, Lectures on the History of Newfoundland, op. cit., p. 118; Davies, op. cit., pp. 60-3.
130. J.H. Plumb, The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725, op. cit., pp. 165-6 and note 2; Idem, Sir Robert Walpole, the King's Minister, pp. 92-4.
131. Hutchins, op. cit., Vol.I, p. liv.
132. P.R.O. Customs, 18/126, Lady Day, 1720.
133. Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1731-1734, p. 522, 14th August, 1733.
134. P.B.A., Mathews Collection, MS. List of Burgesses sent to James and Peter Thompson, London, with record of their voting for officers 1737 to 16th September, 1738.
135. Forecast of Poll, 1740-1, op. cit., P.R.O. Customs 18/204, Lady Day, 1740; 18/214, Lady Day, 1743.
136. Calendar of Treasury Books, XXX, Vol.II, Part 2, p. 180, 19th February, 1718.
137. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 500-3.
138. John Carswell, The Old Cause, Three Biographical Studies in Whiggism, (1954), pp. 149-152; John Carswell and L.A. Drake, The Political Journal of George Bubb Dodington, (Oxford, 1965), p. 169.
139. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 185, 13th May, 1730.
140. Carswell, op. cit., pp. 156-7 and note.
141. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 285 and note (z).

142. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 562; The Hon. H.A. Wyndham, A Family History 1688-1837, The Wyndhams of Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire, (1950), pp. 87, 186-7.
143. Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1731-1734, p. 574.
144. H.M.C., Egmont Diary, Vol.I, p. 231.
145. Sir Peter Thompson to James West, 17th May, 1747, MS. belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole.
146. Trenchard paid Wyndham's share of the annual subscription made by the M.P.s to the Free School in Poole. Trenchard Cash Book, 1725-1738, D.C.R.O., D. 60, F. 61, 11th January, 1736, 29th November, 1737.
147. Trenchard had opposed the 1719 Peerage Bill and in 1721 also supported Walpole in the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble crisis. Richard Chandler, The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons, from the Restoration to the Present Time, (14 vols., 1742-4), Vol.VI, p. 249; Vol.VIII, Appendix III.
148. Ibid, Vol.VIII, Appendix IX; Paul Langford, The Excise Crisis, Society and Politics in the Age of Walpole, (Oxford, 1975), Appendix C, p. 175.
149. Langford, op. cit., pp. 55-61.
150. Carswell, op. cit., p. 176.
151. Langford, op. cit., Chapter IX, passim.
152. Chandler, op. cit., Vol.VIII, Appendix X.
153. Langford, op. cit., pp. 134-6.
154. They voted for the administration on the Spanish Convention and the Place Bill in 1740. Chandler, op. cit., Vol.XII, Appendix.
155. Joseph Gulston, Senior, (c.1694-1766) born in Lisbon, the son of a British merchant. He added extensive trading interests in Hamburg and North and South America to his trade in Lisbon and was connected with the Newfoundland trade. Elected for Tregony in 1737, he supported Walpole and obtained a contract for the supply of masts to the Royal Navy at Portsmouth in 1739. (Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 90 ; L. Namier, England in the Age of the American Revolution, (2nd edition, 1961), p. 244 and note 3; J. Nichols, Illustrations of the Literary History of the 18th Century, (8 vols., 1817-58), Vol.V, pp. 1-59). Thomas Missing (after 1710-1772) was the son of a substantial Portsmouth merchant and government contractor with connections with Newfoundland who was M.P. for Southampton 1722-1727. Missing himself was Sheriff of Hampshire 1739-40. His trading connections ...

155. cont.

... with North America and the commercial links between Poole and Portsmouth recommended him to the Corporation of Poole. (Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.II, pp. 260-1; Surry and Thomas, op. cit., pp. xxv, xxix, lv, note 10, Appendix V, pp. 106, 109).

156. Carswell, op. cit., pp. 187-90.

157. The Salisbury Journal, which was hostile to Walpole, reported such pressure in Southampton and Weymouth as well as Poole in its issues of 23rd September and 28th October, 1740.

158. Ibid, 28th October, 1740; Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1739-1741, Vol.IV, p. 429, 8th September, 1740.

159. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 235-6.

160. Forecast of Poll, 1740-1, op. cit. This was almost certainly compiled for Peter Thompson, a Poole merchant then living in London, who took a close interest in local politics and was unlikely to be deceived by a specious forecast.

161. Trenchard and Wyndham were allocated 38 and 39 votes respectively; Missing and Gulston 38 and 37 votes.

162. List of Burgesses sent to James and Peter Thompson, op. cit.

163. Langford, op. cit., p. 148; Emmett L. Avery and A.H. Scouten, 'The Opposition to Sir Robert Walpole 1737-1739', E.H.R., LXXXIII, (1968), pp. 331-6.

164. K. Matthews, 'William Keen' in The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, (4 vols., 1966 continuing, University of Toronto Press), Vol.III, (1741-1770), pp. 323-4; Tucker MSS., Bodleian Library, Samuel White to John Tucker, 28th February, 1742. The fishing captains had traditionally dispensed justice as 'Fishing Admirals' during the fishing seasons and there was conflict between them and the magistrates, appointed after 1729, who continued to sit during the summer. Professor Matthews felt that this friction ceased "after a few years" because the merchants and their agents were the only individuals available qualified to be magistrates. (Matthews, thesis, op. cit., pp. 360-65). However, Keen's conduct evidently prolonged the conflict into the 1740s.

165. S.J., 11th, 25th November, 2nd December, 1740.

166. 21 of the 22 burgesses who had opposed the administration candidate in the 1738 mayoral election were listed in the forecast of the poll in 1740-1. One was expected to split his vote, 10 were expected to vote for Gulston and Missing and 10 for Trenchard and Wyndham. 2 of the 22 men had become placemen between 1738 and 1740-1 and were expected to vote for Gulston and Missing.

167. Journal of the Committee for Trade and Plantations, January, 1734-5 - December, 1740-1, pp. 317-8, 351-2.
168. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery', op. cit., pp. 372-3, 380-2.
169. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 435.
170. See Chapter Two, p. 32.
171. Surry and Thomas, op. cit., pp. xxv-xxvi, 1, lv, note 10, 135, Appendix VI, Government Contracts.

## CHAPTER TWO

### POOLE CORPORATION IN THE 18th CENTURY c.1740-1774

By 1740 the municipal history of Poole stretched back to the mid-13th century when the town first acquired borough status as part of the Manor of Canford by the Longespee Charter.<sup>(1)</sup> In the 15th and 16th centuries the Borough's privileges had been extended by royal grants and charters, especially when Canford was held by members of the royal family, or others close to the ruler. Thus it had become a Port of the Staple in 1433 when the Manor passed to the Duke of Bedford, Henry V's brother.<sup>(2)</sup> It received its first royal charter, conferring rights of markets and fairs in 1453 when Canford was in the possession of Cardinal Beaufort.<sup>(3)</sup> In 1526, while the Manor was held by the Duke of Richmond, Henry VIII's natural son, the Borough received confirmation of its exemption from the jurisdiction of the Lord Admiral.<sup>(4)</sup>

While the existence of numerous 18th century copies of these earlier grants in the Borough Archives demonstrates the continuing importance of these privileges to the Corporation, it was naturally the Charter of 1568 which "the Corporation was generally governed by".<sup>(5)</sup> This had incorporated the town as "the County and Town of Poole distinct and separate from the County of Dorset".<sup>(6)</sup> The reservation of the view of frankpledge and the assize of bread etc. to the Corporation in this Charter drastically limited the jurisdiction of the Lord of the Manor, although he continued to possess his territorial rights to hold the court leet and receive the traditional fee farm rent.<sup>(7)</sup> To support the dignity and functions of county corporate status the Charter provided for the election of a Sheriff, Recorder, Justices of the Peace and Coroners. In addition to the existing Admiralty Court, Courts of Petty and Quarter Sessions, a Sheriff's Court and a weekly Court of Record were granted.<sup>(8)</sup>

In 1667 Charles II, having recently visited the town,<sup>(9)</sup> granted a further charter which added to the Corporation's rights, most notably the powers to make bye-laws and levy rates.<sup>(10)</sup> The Charter of 1688 restored the Borough's rights which had been lost as a result of the quo warranto proceedings in 1683.<sup>(11)</sup>

#### The Members of the Corporation

During the period 1740-1774 the Corporation numbered on average slightly fewer than 100 members, of whom approximately 75 were resident in Poole.<sup>(12)</sup> Poole was one of the comparatively small group of corporate

boroughs in which "admission to the Corporation was obtained not by succession to a tenement or by Apprenticeship, but solely by Gift, Redemption or Purchase - that is to say, by co-option".<sup>(13)</sup> Presumably because of the absence or early decay of merchant gild organisation there was no formal connection between membership of the Corporation and the exercise of a trade.<sup>(14)</sup>

A bye-law of 1631<sup>(15)</sup> forbade the admission of non-resident burgesses unless they were noblemen, the sons of noblemen, knights, the Recorder or Members of Parliament but by the early 18th century at least this was no longer strictly followed.<sup>(16)</sup> The rights of non-resident burgesses were however limited. They could not serve as officers of the Corporation and were not eligible to vote in the election of these officers.<sup>(17)</sup> Attempts were sometimes made to allow non-resident members to vote in the elections of officers but the evidence suggests that this rule was normally upheld.<sup>(18)</sup> The principal right of the non-resident members was thus the exercise of the parliamentary franchise.

New burgesses were to be elected by the Mayor, four Aldermen and eighteen resident burgesses but in practice this rule was sometimes specifically waived to permit elections to be carried out by as few as twelve burgesses because of the difficulty of assembling eighteen burgesses.<sup>(19)</sup> This waiver was understandable since many members of the Corporation were frequently away from the town at sea or in Newfoundland. It is clear that its use was sometimes abused however by those contending for control of the Corporation and when such feeling was running high there were complaints at its use and at the lack of adequate notice given to the Corporation as a whole.<sup>(20)</sup>

Residents of the town paid a fee for their admission which was increased from £10 to £20 in the 1720s and to £25 in 1775.<sup>(21)</sup> Non-residents were normally charged £40 or £50 by the 1740s,<sup>(22)</sup> but in later years were generally admitted gratis in anticipation of the favours they would perform for the Corporation. Thus the Earl of Shaftesbury was admitted without a fee in 1756 when the Corporation wished to secure his acquiescence in their efforts to establish their rights to the Harbour Dues.<sup>(23)</sup>

As in Leicester and Southampton,<sup>(24)</sup> the need for additional revenue by the Corporation was a principal motive for the creation of new burgesses. This was evident in 1742 and 1747 when money was urgently needed for the repair of the quays, and in 1744 and 1751 when heavy legal expenses had to be met.<sup>(25)</sup> The creation of 30 new burgesses in 1764 was designed to help pay for the new Guildhall.<sup>(26)</sup> The political



motive for the addition of new members was naturally important, especially at times when political controversy in the Corporation was at its strongest. The admissions made in 1751 were thus designed in part to support a political interest and the creation of sixteen new members in 1775 was also partly governed by political considerations.<sup>(27)</sup>

In many boroughs, such as Southampton, Nottingham and Bristol, the leading members of the Corporation were formally distinguished as a Common Council, or a select ruling body, set apart from the ordinary members of the Corporation.<sup>(28)</sup> Such a distinction, providing that the Mayor and twelve Assistants should act for the whole Corporation, had existed in Poole in the 16th century.<sup>(29)</sup> It had subsequently disappeared, probably because it was not incorporated in the 1568 Charter and because the exclusion of the Commonalty householders from the Corporation and the exercise of the parliamentary franchise made it unnecessary. While no formal demarcation existed, in practice however the Mayor and Aldermen acted as an informal controlling oligarchy.

#### The Officers of the Corporation

The Mayor was elected by the burgesses but the nomination system employed, which resembled that used in other corporations,<sup>(30)</sup> seriously limited their freedom of choice. By a custom of uncertain date the existing Mayor and Aldermen nominated three members of the Corporation as candidates. Those who were not chosen were normally allowed two further years on the nomination.<sup>(31)</sup> Since the Aldermen were themselves the former Mayors this nomination system helped to consolidate the power of the leading individuals over the Corporation. As might be expected, most of the Mayors in this period were drawn from the most prominent Corporation families. On a few occasions however less prestigious men were chosen. They were elected as the representatives of more prominent and powerful individuals. For example, John Bird, the Mayor 1772-4, was a mercer who owed his election to the influence of a leading merchant family, the Lesters.<sup>(32)</sup>

The Mayor was ex officio a magistrate, Admiral of the Port and one of the judges of the Court of Record. Although a decision had been made to pay him a salary of £24 in 1689 this practice had evidently been abandoned and the Mayor received only minor perquisites.<sup>(33)</sup> As was common,<sup>(34)</sup> he did however have the privilege of making one new Burgess gratis and frequently chose to admit his son.<sup>(35)</sup>

The Aldermen had no ex officio places as magistrates or judges but were frequently elected amongst the four Justices. The Alderman who was the retiring Mayor was usually chosen as the Senior Bailiff and as such was ex officio a judge in the Court of Record.<sup>(36)</sup>

The Sheriff, elected annually, had the same powers as a Sheriff of any County.<sup>(37)</sup> In general, the duties of Sheriffs were fast becoming merely ceremonial but this was only partly true of the Sheriff of Poole's duties. There are apparently no records of his monthly Court, established by the 1568 Charter, and it probably soon fell into abeyance. The Sheriff's Tourn, an annual inspection of weights and measures was continued, but it became a largely ceremonial occasion, its real functions being assumed by the magistrates courts.<sup>(38)</sup> On the other hand, the Sheriff's functions as Returning Officer and in control of the town gaol meant that his office still had real importance. It was also necessary for members of the Corporation to serve a term as Sheriff before they were eligible for nomination to the mayoralty.<sup>(39)</sup> The Sheriff enjoyed no salary but received a quietus of 24 guineas.

The other officers elected annually by the Corporation were the Water Bailiff, two Coroners, four Constables, twelve Auditors, three Key Keepers and two Constables of the Staple. The Water Bailiff was responsible for the execution of Admiralty jurisdiction and the office was normally the first to which a burgess was elected.<sup>(40)</sup> One Constable received an annual salary.<sup>(41)</sup> The Key Keepers and Constables of the Staple were purely honorary offices.<sup>(42)</sup>

All elected officers had to be resident in the town and this rule was apparently strictly enforced.<sup>(43)</sup> In the earlier years of the 18th century the Corporation had some difficulty in finding members who were willing to accept election, especially to the office of Water Bailiff, the most junior position amongst the officers.<sup>(44)</sup> This reluctance to serve may well have been a result of the depression in the town's trade at that time. By 1740 however, when the town's prosperity had returned, there seems to have been no reluctance to accept office. This contrasts with the experience of the Corporations at Leicester and Southampton where it became difficult to recruit members and officers of the Corporations because of the decline in the activities and prestige of these Corporations and the expense of office.<sup>(45)</sup>

The Town Clerk was elected for life and served as Clerk of the Peace and Prothonotary of the Court of Record. He had a salary of £20, court fees and payment for the Corporation's legal business. The

Recorder was also elected for life.<sup>(46)</sup> The Corporation made appointments to a number of minor offices as well. These included salaried posts such as the two Sergeants at Mace, eight porters and ten bearers, a Scavenger, Boom-Master and Collector of the Town Dues.<sup>(47)</sup> It also enjoyed a small amount of patronage arising from its control over the Free School, two almshouses and one small charity.<sup>(48)</sup>

#### The Corporation's Revenue

The Corporation's income at the beginning of this period was modest. During the years 1741-1756 it received on average £360 per annum.<sup>(49)</sup> It owned comparatively little property, primarily because the town had grown up on a narrow peninsula. Rents for this property produced approximately £100 per annum,<sup>(50)</sup> a trifling sum compared with the income received from property by the Corporations of Leicester and Nottingham.<sup>(51)</sup> Market rents produced only small sums, £20 in 1741 increasing to £63 in 1773. Unlike other corporations,<sup>(52)</sup> Poole Corporation was unable to exploit town charities to swell its income because only one small charity existed.

It possessed one potentially fruitful source of revenue - the Harbour Dues, comprising keyage, wharfage, ballast, careening, anchorage and wheelage, charges imposed on those using the facilities of the port.<sup>(53)</sup> However, the Corporation was able to realise only a small amount from this source because the legality of keyage and wharfage in particular had been challenged in the late 17th century. The inhabitants of Wareham, which could only be approached by water via Poole Harbour, had refused to pay these dues on goods trans-shipped into or from lighters for the passage along the River Frome to and from Wareham. In 1666 or 1667 they had appealed to the King in Council against these dues, but the exemption of pipe-clay from the charges which was then granted had failed to satisfy them.<sup>(54)</sup> They continued to resist payment and other traders, including some inhabitants of Poole itself, had followed their example.<sup>(55)</sup> In 1731 the Corporation had failed to establish its right to the dues at Winchester Assize.<sup>(56)</sup>

The result of this dispute was that an average of only £100 was collected in each year of the 1720s and this amount dwindled lower after the 1731 decision. After 1739 no payments at all seem to have been collected, with the exception of very small sums between 1742 and 1746.<sup>(57)</sup>

The Corporation's expenditure was hardly extravagant. It averaged £390 per annum between 1741 and 1756<sup>(58)</sup> but was swollen by the heavy law costs incurred principally in defending the Borough's rights against the claims of the Lord of the Manor between 1739 and 1748, and in the attempt to secure an Improvement Act which would legalise beyond any doubt their rights to the Harbour Dues. The 1667 Charter gave the Corporation the right to tax the town's inhabitants for a variety of public purposes but the Corporation did not choose to exercise this right to raise additional revenue. Evidently the burgesses had no wish to place an additional burden on themselves and the other townspeople alone when the Harbour Dues provided a means of ensuring that other users of the port should share the burden. Moreover, faced as they were already with expensive challenges to what they assumed were their legal rights, they may well have demurred putting the 1667 Charter to the test.

In order to balance its expenditure the Corporation thus relied heavily on the income received from the creation of burgesses and on mortgages. Burgess money amounted to £400 in 1742, £560 in 1747 and £480 in 1751. Mortgages were raised on, for example, the markets (£400 in 1743) and the newly built Workhouse (£400 in 1739).<sup>(59)</sup> In 1746 the Borough Members advanced over £600 on the partial security of two further mortgages.<sup>(60)</sup>

After the passage of the 1756 Improvement Act, which placed the Harbour Dues on a secure legal footing, the Corporation's financial problems eased considerably but the absence of any surviving accounts for these dues makes it impossible to demonstrate this improvement in revenue in precise terms.

#### The Pattern of Oligarchy

Between 1740 and 1774 the Corporation continued to be dominated by the merchants of the town. Of the 30 burgesses admitted in 1747, six were merchants, at least ten of the fifteen 'mariners' were relatives of merchants and three of the six craftsmen (a shipwright, a hatter and a gunsmith) were closely dependent on the patronage of the merchants. In 1751 over half of the 24 new members were merchants or 'mariners', and a similar pattern appears amongst the 30 men enfranchised in 1764, when twenty merchants or 'mariners' were admitted.<sup>(61)</sup>

A profile of the Corporation in 1773, constructed from the assessments of personal wealth in the Poor Rate of that year illustrates the dominant position which the wealthier members of Poole society enjoyed in the Corporation:<sup>(62)</sup>

Assessment of Personal Wealth	£5,000 and above	£2,000 - £4,999	£1,000 - £1,999	£500 - £999	£100 - £499	Under £100
No. of Corporation Members so assessed	7	13	12	10	22	4
Corporation Members as a percentage of the total number of ratepayers so assessed	100%	86%	41%	33%	19%	7%

As was almost universal in town government in the 18th century,<sup>(63)</sup> the Corporation was itself an oligarchy and was in turn controlled by an inner oligarchy drawn from the most prominent merchants who served as Mayor, Aldermen and Justices. Often their prestige and power depended on their success in trade and related wealth. The extensive Jolliffe family which provided three Mayors during this period achieved great wealth in both the Carolina and Newfoundland trade.<sup>(64)</sup> Others, while not so outstandingly successful as merchants, gained prestige and support because they could claim descent from Poole merchants of the early 17th century. The Durell family, who provided Mayors in 1749, 1753 and 1756 belonged to this category.<sup>(65)</sup> Each leading family or individual made use of lesser merchants or craftsmen as their lieutenants in Corporation affairs. In return for their services these men could look forward to advancement in the Corporation and their business under the patronage of their superiors. Isaac Lester, a cooper, was one of the aides of John Masters (Mayor 1748 and 1752) and became Sheriff in 1751 almost certainly because of Master's influence.<sup>(66)</sup>

There was much intermarriage between members of the Corporation families.<sup>(67)</sup> This, and the comparatively small number of burgesses, meant that the Corporation was a closely knit body, like the merchants of Liverpool Corporation, and unlike the merchants of Bristol.<sup>(68)</sup> The leading families in Poole could exploit the web of social and economic ties in the Corporation and form an effective ruling group over it.

It might be expected that the competitive rivalries of the merchants' commercial interests would lead to serious divisions amongst them. In fact there were surprisingly few quarrels over trade. In part this was because the general prosperity of the Newfoundland trade at this time provided ample rewards for the merchants. Paradoxically too, their traditional anxiety over the considerable risks their trade entailed bred a common pessimistic outlook amongst them.<sup>(69)</sup> Information

about their relations in the Town House on the quay, which served as their club, is scanty but references in the diaries of the Lester brothers to heated arguments there normally concerned occasions when differences existed over what measures should be recommended to government on behalf of the trade, rather than individual quarrels over the trade itself.<sup>(70)</sup> Both these diaries and Sir Peter Thompson's Letter Book show that the merchants kept themselves informed of one another's progress and occasionally allowed themselves to gloat over individual setbacks but refrained from bitter rivalry.<sup>(71)</sup>

Nor did differences in denominational loyalties cause any serious divisions in the Corporation during this period. There were very many Dissenters in the town and nineteen of the 57 effective members of the Corporation in 1740-1 can be identified as Dissenters.<sup>(72)</sup> (In addition, six burgesses were Quakers). The spirit of toleration was so strong in the community in the early 18th century that many Anglicans attended the Presbyterian Church for the evening sermon (not then preached in their own church), while many Dissenters practised occasional conformity.<sup>(73)</sup> In Poole as elsewhere the growth of a secular spirit in the 18th century encouraged more Dissenters to follow this practice, or to conform entirely.<sup>(74)</sup> The Dissenting Church was wracked by serious disputes over occasional conformity in the 1730s and 1750s and the schisms resulted in the emergence of two congregations. A Congregational Church, under evangelical ministry, retained a strong following amongst the Dissenters of comparatively humble rank in society, while a small Unitarian Church struggled to keep the loyalties of a dwindling congregation of wealthier individuals.<sup>(75)</sup> Some members of the Corporation, for example, George Tito (Mayor in 1755 and 1771) and William Budden (Sheriff in 1767) remained in the Unitarian Church but others, John Green (Mayor 1767) and John Bird (Mayor 1772-4 and 1776), became Anglicans.<sup>(76)</sup>

The divisions and falling away amongst the Dissenters in Poole meant that they did not exercise the powerful influence they enjoyed for example in Nottingham or Bridport.<sup>(77)</sup> Nor were they in a position in these years to constitute a strong opposition to the Corporation like that developed in Leicester, where their influence rested on the rise of a completely new economic interest and the Corporation they opposed was "the old fashioned defender of Altar and Throne".<sup>(78)</sup> In contrast, no such new economic interest arose in Poole and until the mid 1770s the Corporation remained tolerant of religious differences, admitting a number of Dissenters to their ranks when groups of new members were elected, as shown overleaf:<sup>(79)</sup>

Date	1742	1747	1751	1764	1775
Total No. of Members made:	19	30	24	30	16
Dissenters identified:	4	8	6	3	-
Quakers identified:	2	-	-	4	2

The Corporation as a whole, and its leaders, thus enjoyed a large measure of social and economic unity. The ties between the lesser merchants, 'mariners', craftsmen and shopkeepers amongst rank and file burgesses and the leading merchants were such that they were willing to accept the controlling influence of the latter.

The one major threat to the effective power of the leaders of the Corporation at this time was their failure to co-operate with one another for personal or political reasons. Between 1747 and 1755 these differences amongst them were so strong that they divided the Corporation into two camps.<sup>(80)</sup> The principal cause of this division was the ambition of John Masters, a successful merchant whose aggressive personality and conduct prevented any reunion of the Corporation until his death.<sup>(81)</sup> While personal and political jealousies clearly existed at other times, it was only during this period of eight years that they became a very serious distraction for the Corporation during this part of the 18th century.

The control exercised by the leaders of the Corporation was facilitated also by the small size of the body and the low proportion of members who took a regular and active part in its proceedings. Deaths and removals from the town meant that there were often far fewer members than the average total of 100 burgesses, before batches of new members were admitted. Thus in 1751 the election of 24 new burgesses was needed to bring the total membership to 90.<sup>(82)</sup> Some of the nominal members took little part in the Corporation. The non-resident burgesses were not normally active in the Corporation's domestic affairs. Many resident burgesses were also frequently absent because of their engagement in the Newfoundland and other trades of the port.

Comparatively high attendances at Corporation meetings were recorded at the annual election of officers, and when the business was of particular importance - as in 1743 and 1748, when 45 and 41 members respectively attended meetings which dealt with the Lord of the Manor's threats to the town's liberties.<sup>(83)</sup> Such occasions were exceptional however and when the business was of a routine nature very few burgesses were present and matters were left almost entirely to the Mayor and Aldermen, who naturally took the initiative on more important business as well.<sup>(84)</sup>

The Corporation met more regularly than Leeds Corporation,<sup>(85)</sup> but the contents of the Monthly Meeting Books shows that their title was something of a misnomer. In only one year between 1740 and 1774 did the Corporation meet on twelve occasions and in eight of these years three or fewer meetings were recorded.<sup>(86)</sup> The Mayor's Accounts show that much business was conducted informally at the George or Antelope Inns between the Mayor and Aldermen.<sup>(87)</sup>

The status and influence of the inner oligarchy was enhanced too by the power they enjoyed on the Bench of Magistrates and the Parish Vestry. The Mayor and Aldermen virtually monopolised the Bench and closely supervised the affairs of the Parish during this period. This helped to bring about a considerable interfusion of the functions of the Corporation, the Justices and the Parish, theoretically three separate bodies. For example, the Corporation was traditionally responsible for the control and maintenance of the quays and harbour, but such matters frequently came before the Justices at Quarter Sessions as a result of presentments by the Grand Jury. So too did matters concerning the cleaning and repair of streets for which the Corporation and the Parish were respectively responsible. As commonly happened,<sup>(88)</sup> those who dominated the Corporation enjoyed a controlling influence over the whole of the municipal life of the Borough.

While it was not to be expected that elaborate administrative methods should be used in the 18th century, without doubt the existence of this oligarchical control contributed to the comparative informality in the working of municipal government in the town. Quite apart from the merging of functions noted above, the procedures within the Corporation itself were less sophisticated than those used by some other 18th century corporations. Bye-laws governing the conduct of Corporation meetings evidently existed but there is only one reference to their enforcement in these years.<sup>(89)</sup> Leicester Corporation by contrast had adopted standing orders for its meetings in the late 17th century and revised them on three occasions in the following century.<sup>(90)</sup> Poole Corporation made little use of committees, apart from occasional ad hoc committees in this period. Bristol Corporation made systematic use of committees.<sup>(91)</sup> Mayors of Poole made little use of their jurisdiction as Admirals of the Port through the Admiralty Court to enforce regulations on fishing and other uses of the harbour. The Admiralty Court met on only three occasions between 1740 and 1774 when it undertook ceremonial



perambulations of the bounds of the harbour.<sup>(92)</sup> The enforcement of regulations for the use of the harbour was instead undertaken by the Water Bailiff through the Petty Sessions.<sup>(93)</sup>

This comparative informality in procedure was however not merely the result of oligarchical government - Bristol and Leicester Corporations were as oligarchical as Poole. It stemmed also from the small area and population of Poole. The Borough covered rather less than 170 acres<sup>(94)</sup> and had in 1759 an estimated 3,137 permanent inhabitants.<sup>(95)</sup> The tasks of municipal government in Poole were thus less extensive than in larger communities such as Bristol or Leicester and the need for more elaborate arrangements less pressing.

#### The Quality of Municipal Government

It has frequently been assumed that town government in the 18th century was universally irresponsible and ineffective because it was oligarchical. In truth, the quality of government provided by the unreformed corporations varied a great deal.<sup>(96)</sup> As the Webbs pointed out, the increasing responsibilities of the Justices and the Parish in the 18th century had the effect of reducing the functions of many corporations so greatly that they declined into committees solely concerned with the management of corporate property.<sup>(97)</sup> Nottingham Corporation, for example, took a very limited view of its responsibilities, confining itself to the administration of its property, the city charities and law and order.<sup>(98)</sup> The same tendencies were evident in Leicester Corporation, although it showed some awareness of its public duties.<sup>(99)</sup> In Bristol, the Corporation's lack of interest in such matters as the administration of the port and the management of the poor helped prompt the creation of separate bodies for these and other functions.<sup>(100)</sup> There, and in Southampton, the passage of Improvement Acts to remedy the deficiencies of municipal government had the effect of causing a further decline in the status of the Corporations and the scope of their responsibilities by encouraging them to leave improvement in government to other bodies.<sup>(101)</sup> Elsewhere corporations took a broader view of their responsibilities and provided more effective government. Leeds Corporation showed some awareness of the need for improvements in the town.<sup>(102)</sup> Liverpool and Hull Corporations achieved greater success in providing for the changing needs of the communities for which they were responsible.<sup>(103)</sup>

While many meetings of Poole Corporation were concerned solely with the management of its property this never became the only function of the Corporation. It remained concerned with all that affected the economic life of the town and thus did not decline like Leicester

Corporation into a body whose functions became "for the most part ... eleemosynary and political" because it was divorced from the economic life of the town.<sup>(104)</sup> Instead, as in Hull, "the continuing unity of political and economic power"<sup>(105)</sup> in the hands of the Corporation ensured that it was in general actively employed in the defence and furtherance of the town's economic and political interests as need or opportunity arose. Since the Corporation was completely dominated by the merchants of the town it was above all concerned with the literal defence of the town and harbour against the dangers of war and with their political defence against economic decay, and in particular the threatening ambitions of the Lord of the Manor of Canford. The members of the Corporation acting as Justices upheld law and order. As burgesses, Justices or members of the Parish Vestry, they showed some awareness too of the need for routine services - the cleaning and repair of streets, the management of the poor and the prevention of public nuisances - but these took second place to their prime concern with the rights of the town, especially as they affected its trade.

Because of its paramount maritime interests the Corporation was very much alive to the dangers from foreign war and the Webbs' assertion that "the old duty of the Borough against a foreign enemy had passed out of memory"<sup>(106)</sup> does not apply to Poole, although it was true of Southampton.<sup>(107)</sup> The Corporation became concerned that Brownsea Island in the harbour, together with its castle, had passed into private ownership, and made some efforts to secure control of the castle for the purpose of defending the harbour after 1722.<sup>(108)</sup> In 1744 the Corporation corresponded with the town's Members over the need for guns to defend the harbour.<sup>(109)</sup> During the '45 Rebellion Poole was also more concerned with the threat from the Jacobites than other boroughs in the country, who "treated the whole affair with a combination of petty annoyance and casual boredom."<sup>(110)</sup> A defensive ditch was ordered to be made across the narrow neck of land joining the Poole peninsula to the mainland, although it must be admitted that the cost of the project prevented its completion.<sup>(111)</sup> Doubtless Poole's comparatively strong reaction to the Jacobite menace is partly to be explained by fear of the suspected Jacobite sympathies of the Lord of the Manor of Canford and the powerful Weld family at Lulworth,<sup>(112)</sup> but it also reflects a greater awareness than elsewhere of the need for the town to concern itself with its defence.

By the 1730s the Corporation's rights over the port and their ability to raise revenue from it, already seriously challenged by the inhabitants of Wareham, were also threatened by Sir John Webb (? - 1745), the Lord of the Manor of Canford. He commenced Chancery actions in which he claimed not only the ownership of waste land lying between the high and low water marks around the harbour, including a saltern leased by the Corporation to an inhabitant of Poole, but also the rights to petty customs. These included some of the Harbour Dues, claimed by the Corporation and in dispute with Wareham, keyage, cellarage (for goods stored in Poole warehouses) and wheelage, a duty charged by the Corporation on coal transported from the quays.<sup>(113)</sup>

Relations with the Lord of the Manor and his predecessors had been for long uneasy. The Webbs had shown their readiness to exploit the Tory reaction in Charles II's reign and James II's attack on the boroughs by attempting to revive manorial control over Poole.<sup>(114)</sup> As a notorious recusant family they were suspect in this strongly Protestant Borough. In the early 18th century conflict had broken out with the Lord of the Manor over the use of common and wasteland and the Corporation had asserted the rights of the town's inhabitants to use these lands by demolishing enclosures erected by the Lord of the Manor.<sup>(115)</sup>

In 1742 Webb won a partial victory when his claim to the saltern on the harbour shore was upheld because the court accepted that the land on which it was situated was above the high water mark.<sup>(116)</sup> At great expense the Corporation were however able to fight off his claims to the petty customs. They followed up this success by denouncing Webb's claim to collect chiminage, a charge levied on those using a path to the common land, and in 1744 ordered the booth erected by Webb to collect the charge to be demolished.<sup>(117)</sup>

Webb's death in 1745 brought only a brief respite in the struggle between the Manor and the Borough. His successor, Sir Thomas Webb (? - 1763), continued further actions initiated by his father to establish the claims of the Webbs to other properties built on the shores of the harbour, until 1748, when they appear to have been abandoned without being decided.<sup>(118)</sup> Thereafter relations with Canford were quiet until 1781.

The Corporation thus had some success in defending the liberties of the town but its right to control the shores of the harbour had been effectively challenged and a serious potential menace to the future development of the port remained. However, the nature of the finding

in the case of the saltern in 1742 meant that the Corporation was understandably unwilling to take the initiative to establish its rights to the harbour shores.

#### The Harbour Dues and the Improvement Act of 1756

Despite the growing need for repairs to the quays, shown in the Quarter Sessions Presentments, especially from 1744 to 1749,<sup>(119)</sup> it was not until 1749 that the Corporation petitioned for an Act of Parliament to put their claim to levy the Harbour Dues on a firm legal footing.

The delay was clearly caused in part by the expensive struggle with the Lord of the Manor. The Corporation was also involved in three other law cases between 1739 and 1743. One of them arose from the resistance of victuallers and ale-house keepers to paying licence fees to the Corporation, and may have been encouraged in part by the Corporation's inability to enforce payment of the Harbour Dues primarily by the traders of Wareham.<sup>(120)</sup>

However, while a few individual Poole merchants had attempted to avoid paying these dues, there is no indication that the delay in approaching Parliament for a confirmatory act was caused by opposition in Poole, either within or outside the Corporation. The situation in Poole thus contrasted with that in Southampton where the Corporation's attempts to enforce payment of petty customs resulted in a long struggle with the merchants there. As Professor Temple Patterson surmises this was probably because Southampton Corporation no longer included the most enterprising merchants.<sup>(121)</sup> Poole Corporation continued to represent the economic interest of the community and the delay was not caused by the Corporation's unwillingness to solve the problem.

Apart from the distraction resulting from the conflict with the Manor, it was the controversy aroused in the Corporation by the ambitions of John Masters to obtain control of it and one or both of the town's parliamentary seats which brought further delay. Masters, having failed to secure election to Parliament for the Borough in 1747, secured the mayoralty in 1748. Because he had not previously served as Sheriff, as was customary, his opponents started quo warranto proceedings against him, although these were subsequently dropped.<sup>(122)</sup> Both Masters and his principal opponent, Sir Peter Thompson,<sup>(123)</sup> supported an application to Parliament as a remedy for the dispute over the Harbour Dues<sup>(124)</sup> but the conflict over the election of 1747 and Masters's mayoralty prevented any real progress on this until October 1749, when the Corporation agreed to petition Parliament.<sup>(125)</sup>

The Corporation's petition, which came before the Commons in December 1749, protested that they were "quite remediless in their Prosecutions" to establish their rights to the Harbour Dues, because inhabitants of Poole had not been accepted as competent witnesses in the previous trial of their claim. It represented that the port would be utterly ruined unless the Corporation's rights were guaranteed.<sup>(126)</sup> The petition was referred to a Committee which included three friends of the Corporation, Thompson, Joseph Gulston, one of the Borough's Members, and James West, Joint Secretary to the Treasury and Thompson's friend, for whom he had secured the Recordership of Poole in 1746 partly in the hope that he would assist in securing a statute for the Borough.<sup>(127)</sup> Despite this, the petition was subsequently withdrawn because of the hostility of the inhabitants of Wareham who secured the support of Lord Shaftesbury.<sup>(128)</sup> The Corporation's efforts to persuade Shaftesbury to drop his opposition in May 1750 failed, and after providing money to pay the cost of the petition the Corporation left the matter until late in 1755.<sup>(129)</sup>

There were two clear reasons for this further delay. The Corporation needed time to pay off the burden of debt accumulated from the law suits of the 1740s and the parliamentary petition. Since the town's M.P.s were evidently unwilling to pay the Corporation's debts when asked to do so,<sup>(130)</sup> recourse was made again to the creation of burgesses to meet part of the sum outstanding. Secondly, in 1753 the conflict between Masters and his opponents flared up again at the election of Corporation officers. Ignoring the customary nomination system, Masters had two of his partisans installed as the Mayor and Sheriff amid scenes of violent uproar at the Guildhall. Quo warranto proceedings were initiated and again abandoned.<sup>(131)</sup> It was not until after Masters's death in June 1755 that the Corporation was able to regain its unity.<sup>(132)</sup> Almost immediately it decided to make a further application to Parliament, having gained a promise of loans from the town's Members to pay the expense.<sup>(133)</sup>

The Corporation now sought not only to secure the Harbour Dues for the upkeep and improvement of the port but also the power to provide for a nightly watch, street lighting and a gunpowder magazine (primarily for gunpowder belonging to ships in the port) from a separate rate.<sup>(134)</sup> Leave was granted to bring in the Bill on 27th January and after a smooth passage it received the royal assent on 15th April. A petition from Wareham for exemption from the dues resulted in a generous measure of exemption being incorporated in the measure. Significantly, it was Lord Shaftesbury who reported the Bill from the committee stage in the Lords.<sup>(135)</sup>

As in the majority of improvement acts the Corporation was not given exclusive control over the new powers in respect of lighting, the watch and powder magazine. These were entrusted to a committee of the Mayor, Justices and eleven elected representatives of the ratepayers.<sup>(136)</sup> The inclusion of elected representatives was still comparatively novel in 1756,<sup>(137)</sup> but the Corporation was able to adjust to this relationship and maintain its superior position for some time. The Corporation however retained exclusive control of the Harbour Dues since the Act confirmed what was regarded as its prescriptive right. As long as the port and harbour, the principal concern of the community, remained in its charge there was no danger that Poole Corporation's status and authority would decline in the manner in which many 18th century corporations decayed as a result of the passage of improvement acts.<sup>(138)</sup>

Wrangling over the costs that should be allowed to George Tito, the Mayor responsible for obtaining the 1756 Act, went on for over two years after its passage,<sup>(139)</sup> but the Corporation acted promptly in enforcing those provisions in which it had the greatest interest - the collection of Harbour Dues and their expenditure on the installations of the port. By November 1756 a Treasurer of the dues had been appointed.<sup>(140)</sup> Early in 1757 immediate repairs were carried out on the Town Quay and after a committee had surveyed further deficiencies, this work was undertaken in 1757 and 1758.<sup>(141)</sup> In the next decade extensive improvements to the quays began: in 1765 the Hamworthy Quay was enlarged and in 1766 the process of buying out the owners of private quays to lengthen the New Quay commenced, its completion being marked by the building of a new Fish Shambles at the end of the extension in 1772.<sup>(142)</sup>

The Corporation was less energetic in implementing the other provisions of the Act however. The Lamp and Watch Committee, dominated by members of the Corporation, apparently did not begin work until July 1757.<sup>(143)</sup> The gunpowder magazine was not built until 1780.<sup>(144)</sup> The site for it nominated in the Act was considered too near the quays to be safe and presumably doubts over the legality of an alternative site accounted for some of the subsequent delay.<sup>(145)</sup> But since it took two dangerous incidents, involving ships with large amounts of powder on board, to persuade the Corporation to establish a committee to consider an alternative site for the magazine in 1775,<sup>(146)</sup> and a further five years to build it, the Corporation clearly used the doubts of legality as an excuse for doing nothing. Their laxity at this time in managing some other matters in the port, where their direct interest was not apparently involved, is shown by their failure to remove a wreck from a

quayside until more than three years had passed, and the prolonged complaints at Quarter Sessions about their neglect of the ferry boat plying between Poole and Hamworthy.<sup>(147)</sup>

The 1756 Improvement Act should be viewed in conjunction with the successful petition for the extension of the turnpike road from Wimborne to Poole Gate, which the Mayor and Sir Peter Thompson were pressing at this time.<sup>(148)</sup> Together they demonstrate that Poole was affected by the widespread concern for urban improvement characteristic of the mid-18th century.<sup>(149)</sup> The manner in which the Act was implemented however shows that the members of the Corporation were principally concerned with the improvement of what affected their interests most closely - the Harbour Dues and the quays of the port. Not even the disastrous fires in Dorset towns in the 18th century prompted them to act more speedily over the powder magazine.<sup>(150)</sup> There is evidence too that some of the Corporation had opposed the inclusion of lighting powers in the Bill and had only agreed to them for the sake of the quays.<sup>(151)</sup>

Accepting that the Corporation's behaviour was governed by self-interest in the main, their concentration on the repair and improvement of the quays was effective. Complaints from Quarter Sessions juries about the structural state of the quays cease in the early 1760s. The improvements the Corporation secured in the port assisted it to take full advantage of the favourable developments in the Newfoundland trade after the Seven Years War,<sup>(152)</sup> and thus constituted a significant achievement for the general prosperity of the town. While their conduct over the magazine was reprehensible the leaders of the Corporation were responsible enough in administering the lighting and the watch after their slow start.<sup>(153)</sup> In this respect, their conduct compared favourably with that of the body responsible for implementing the 1770 Improvement Act in Southampton.<sup>(154)</sup> The self-interest of the Corporation of Poole was to a degree enlightened and the community as a whole benefited from the Improvement Act.

#### The Corporation and other aspects of Municipal Government

Through their control of the Bench of Magistrates and the Parish Vestry the leaders of the Corporation dominated those areas of municipal life which were in theory outside the purview of the Corporation. Again, they showed less concern for some of these responsibilities where their own interests were not closely involved.

As men of property the Justices were active in upholding law and public order. The records of the Petty and Quarter Sessions that have survived demonstrate this concern. Besides the numerous cases of theft and assault there were frequent convictions for swearing oaths and curses and keeping disorderly houses.<sup>(155)</sup> Rigorous searches were carried out for highwaymen lurking in the desolate land to the north of the town and groups of beggars entering the town were given short shrift.<sup>(156)</sup> In all, there is no evidence that the Poole magistrates neglected these duties in the way that the Bristol magistrates neglected the work of Petty Sessions.<sup>(157)</sup> On the other hand, the Justices sometimes used their power in a partial manner. In 1773, for example, they were easily persuaded by some of the leading burgesses to quash a poor rate that was considered inequitable.<sup>(158)</sup> On occasions the recalcitrant employees of prominent merchants were gaoled at the prompting of their employers.<sup>(159)</sup>

The Justices showed much less concern for public amenities. The Grand Jury at Quarter Sessions, composed of the lesser merchants, craftsmen and shopkeepers, were free to present a wide variety of public nuisances ranging from fire hazards to obstructions in the streets. This procedure introduced an element of public accountability into the administration of public amenities but its effectiveness was limited. The Justices were able to ignore or defer consideration of such complaints if they were embarrassing to them or their associates in the Corporation. Thus presentments of the Mayor frequently received no recorded response from the Justices or remarks such as "to be considered".<sup>(160)</sup> The Mayor was presented eight times between February 1743 and October 1749 for not repairing the streets, and only on one occasion did the Justices venture a written answer when they ordered that it was "to be done as soon as possible".<sup>(161)</sup> Even when the Justices ordered more resolute action involving the Mayor, they clearly neglected to enforce their orders. For example, in July 1757 the Mayor was presented for neglecting the Market House, "part in a ruinous, shattered condition, it being in great danger of falling into the streets, and a nuisance", and the Court ordered it "to be repaired forthwith or indicted".<sup>(162)</sup> Grand Juries were nevertheless to repeat the same presentment at the next three Quarter Sessions.<sup>(163)</sup> The private interests of powerful members of the Corporation were also defended. An alleged encroachment on the public way by Alderman John Skinner, who enclosed "an ancient road on Strand Shore", was presented again and again apparently without any satisfactory remedy from July 1773 to May 1778.<sup>(164)</sup>



Despite these limitations, the influence of the Grand Jury was sufficient to ensure that at least the very minimum was done to clean and repair the streets and check the worst of the public nuisances. There is also some evidence that more attention was paid to their presentments from c.1754. From this time the responses of the Justices were more frequent and fuller. It is difficult to detect any real improvement in the standard of public amenities at this time from the presentments but the closer concern apparently shown by the Justices may be linked with their willingness, as members of the Corporation, to give some support to the additional amenities introduced by the 1756 Improvement Act.<sup>(165)</sup>

The Mayor and members of the Corporation were also closely involved in the work of the Parish Vestry. The Mayor attended its meetings frequently, especially when the business concerned the appointment of officers such as the Vestry Clerk.<sup>(166)</sup> Members of the Corporation were charged with the supervision of the building of the Workhouse in 1739-40 and afterwards dominated the Workhouse Committee.<sup>(167)</sup> The routine work of the Parish appears to have been conducted reasonably efficiently, with the exception of its responsibility for repairing the streets through the elected Waywardens. This task was too complex and expensive for amateur and almost certainly unwilling supervisors,<sup>(168)</sup> and the blurring of responsibility for the streets between the Parish and the Corporation probably created further difficulty. The management of the poor was apparently economical but humane by the standards of the day. Little was spent in litigation over the settlement of, and removals of, the poor.<sup>(169)</sup> The master of the Workhouse was also closely supervised. Medical aid was provided for the paupers and in 1762 and 1769 they were inoculated against smallpox.<sup>(170)</sup>

The authority of the Corporation over the Parish was challenged however during this period. The conflict arose over the election of the ministers of St. James Church. The Corporation claimed the exclusive right of election but the ratepayers of the Parish asserted their right to share in the election. The issue did not arise as a direct conflict between the ratepayers and the Corporation until 1748, for at the previous election in 1734 both parties had agreed on the same candidate. In 1748 however the Mayor disallowed the votes of the ratepayers at a joint meeting between them and the Corporation. The members of the Corporation were thus able to elect their candidate and defeat the ratepayers' candidate. At the next vacancy in 1755 the Parish and the Corporation held separate meetings and chose different candidates, but the ratepayers

were able to install their candidate in the Church and maintain him there by force of numbers. Eventually the Corporation were forced to accept their success. In 1767, when a further election was necessary, no conflict arose because at an apparently joint meeting the ratepayers agreed with the choice made by the Corporation.<sup>(171)</sup>

The behaviour of the Corporation in the matter shows an exclusive attitude. It naturally regarded the right to elect the ministers as a form of property. By 1767, a minority of the Corporation had realised that they could use their right to keep the appointment within the Corporation but the burgess they nominated then was unsuccessful.<sup>(172)</sup> The issue was significant. The elections of ministers in 1788 and 1791 were again disputed by the ratepayers. The ratepayers were to make use of the Parish Vestry in their struggle with the Corporation to obtain the parliamentary franchise beginning in 1774.<sup>(173)</sup>

One major difficulty in seeing the Corporation of Poole in perspective is the problem of establishing the general state of municipal government in the 18th century. As Professor Keith Lucas has recently stressed of unreformed local government as a whole, "the infinite variety of the scene" means that "There really was no system, and every generalisation ought to be accompanied by a score of qualifications and exceptions".<sup>(174)</sup>

It is however clear that the Corporation of Poole had not decayed like those of Malmesbury or Buckingham into "a small caucus with few functions except electing Members of Parliament".<sup>(175)</sup> Poole Corporation was naturally concerned with its exclusive privilege of electing the Borough Members but it was only during the period 1747-1754 that the burgesses were seriously distracted from their other responsibilities by political struggles related to parliamentary elections.

Nor did the Corporation allow its status and responsibilities to decline, either before or after the passage of the 1756 Improvement Act, and it thus compares favourably with the corporations of Bristol, Leicester, Nottingham and Southampton. Poole Corporation retained its standing because those who controlled it had personal interests in seeing that its responsibilities for the management of the harbour and the port were carried out reasonably effectively. Their concern extended to all matters which affected the trade of the town,<sup>(176)</sup> and the Corporation therefore interested itself in business ranging from the literal defence of the port to the economical management of the poor.

Like other 18th century corporations, it was much concerned with its property and its rights. Like many corporations it faced numerous challenges to its rights in the 18th century.<sup>(177)</sup> It had some success in fighting off these threats from the Lord of the Manor, the town of Wareham and the ratepayers of Poole.

Poole Corporation took its judicial role seriously and, allowing for partiality amongst the magistrates, they appear to have been more effective than the magistrates in some provincial towns.<sup>(178)</sup> The civil jurisdiction of the Court of Record was also effective.<sup>(179)</sup> The court remained active in Poole, showing no sign of the decay which affected similar courts in many other towns during this century.<sup>(180)</sup> It flourished because it met the needs of a community with complex trading interests.

The oligarchy controlling the Corporation was not entirely lacking in concern for public services but as was general at this time, the provision of such services came last in the Corporation's view of the responsibility of municipal government. Its leaders took the least interest in those matters where their own interests as merchants were the least directly affected. Roads, drainage and even the safe storage of gunpowder were subject to neglect. It is very doubtful if the Corporation's limited income (until after 1756) had any real effect on its interest or efficiency in providing public services since it never made use of its privilege to levy rates granted by the 1667 charter.<sup>(181)</sup>

Towards the end of this period there are some hints that the Corporation was becoming more exclusive in its attitude - in the proportionately lower number of Dissenters enfranchised in the admissions made in 1764 and the attempt to reserve the patronage of St. James for a burgess. On the whole however, the success of Poole Corporation in administering those functions for which it was clearly responsible - the harbour and port, the Corporation's property and its rights, and the maintenance of law and order - entitle it to be ranked with the corporations of Hull and Liverpool where the ruling oligarchies also provided municipal government which was responsible and efficient by the standards of the day.

1. See Appendix A, Charters and other grants of authority made to the Borough of Poole, c.1248-1688.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. This grant in effect confirmed the right of the Corporation to control Poole Harbour, a right first recognised in the Winchelsea Certificate of 1364. John Sydenham, The History of the Town and County of Poole, pp. 365-8.
5. P.B.A., Uncalendared MS., Book of Extracts from Borough Records, undated and attributed to c.1737.
6. H.P. Smith, The History of the Borough and County of the Town of Poole, Vol.II, p. 87.
7. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 186.
8. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 180-3.
9. Smith, op. cit., pp. 176-81.
10. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 201.
11. Chapter One, p. 7.
12. This calculation is based on the following sources: P.B.A., Mathews Collection, Forecast of the Poll, 1740-1; Newcastle (Clumber) MSS., John Masters to Joseph Gulston, 19th November, 1752; Sir Peter Thompson's Letter Book, List of Burgesses, 1761, (MS. belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole; B.L. Add. MSS., 38373, 199, Liverpool Papers, Vol.CLXXXIV, ff. 86-7, List of Burgesses, 1762; D.C.R.O., Rempstone Estate, D. 86, F. 2, MS. Poll Book, 21st March, 1768.
13. S. and B. Webb, English Local Government, Book III, The Manor and the Borough, p. 298.
14. The 1568 Charter granted the privilege of a gild but there is no evidence that one ever existed. The Fraternity of St. George, dissolved as a charity in Edward VI's reign, was a religious guild with charitable functions. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 325-6.
15. P.B.A., Corporation Record Book, 1566-1700, f. 65.
16. In the early 18th century merchants from other ports were sometimes made burgesses. For example, John Arnold of Portsmouth, 1712; William Dale of Christchurch, 1713. P.B.A., BA. 19, 30.
17. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 224, 1689.
18. For example, George Bubb Dodington was unable to secure the acceptance of the votes of non-resident members at the elections of ...

18. cont.  
... Corporation officers in 1752. John Carswell and L.A. Drake, The Political Journal of George Bubb Dodington, p. 169.
19. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 220, 1689; Corporation Record Book, 1702-1816, f. 206, 6th November, 1734, f. 251, 5th May, 1742, f. 267, 6th June, 1744, f. 287, 2nd December, 1747.
20. Corporation Record Book, 1702-1816, op. cit., f. 310-1, 16th October, 1751; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 1745-1779, 3rd August, 7th September, 1768.
21. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 78, 5th October, 1715, f. 127, 1st January, 1720; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 7th December, 1775.
22. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 268, 6th June, 1744.
23. Ibid, f. 321, 7th April, 1756.
24. R. W. Greaves, The Corporation of Leicester 1689-1836, (1939), p. 56; A. Temple Patterson, A History of Southampton 1700-1914, (3 vols., University of Southampton, 1966-75), Vol.I, pp. 29-33.
25. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 251, 5th May, 1742, f. 267, 6th June, 1744, f. 287, 2nd December, 1747; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 6th May, 1752.
26. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 4th January 1764.
27. John Masters to Joseph Culston, 19th November, 1752, op. cit.; D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 6, Isaac Lester's Diary, 2nd, 5th, 8th, 11th, 27th November, 1st, 5-7th December, 1775. (Members of the Corporation were liable to be disfranchised for contumacious conduct but this happened on only one occasion during this period and the member concerned was subsequently re-admitted. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., ff. 257, 261, 6th July, 7th September, 1743).
28. Patterson, op. cit., pp. 12-13; Malcolm I. Thomis, Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835, (Oxford, 1969), p. 115; Graham Bush, Bristol and its Municipal Government 1820-1851, (Bristol Record Society Publications, Vol.XXIX, 1977), p. 17.
29. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 171-6, 188-9.
30. For example, in Southampton, (Patterson, op. cit., p. 14), and Hull, (Gordon Jackson, Hull in the 18th Century, a Study in Economic and Social History, (1972), p. 308).
31. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 120, 21st October, 1728.
32. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 18th September, 1772, 17th September, 1773, 16th September, 1774.
33. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 210, 1689; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 1813-1835, Answers to the Municipal Corporations Commissioner, January, 1834.

34. Webbs, op. cit., p. 310.
35. For example, William Skinner (1715), Thomas Franklin (1731), P.B.A., B.A. 46, 101; Christopher Jolliffe (1755); Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 319, 6th March, 1755.
36. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 1813-1835, op. cit., January, 1834.
37. Ibid.
38. See Petty Sessions Bread Convictions 1768-1834 for convictions of bakers and other traders for using deficient weights. P.B.A., PSB. 1-106.
39. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 222, 5th January, 1737.
40. Ibid.
41. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., January, 1834.
42. Ibid.
43. In 1732 and 1765 Corporation officers who had left the town were replaced. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., ff. 195-6, 351.
44. Ibid, f. 10, 19th January, 1703, f. 77, 30th October, 1713, f. 172, 5th November, 1728.
45. Greaves, op. cit., p. 55; Patterson, op. cit., pp. 68-9.
46. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., January, 1834.
47. Ibid.
48. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 407-8, 409-12, 415-9.
49. P.B.A., 30(8), 31(9), Mayors' Account Books, 1716-48 and 1748-1780.
50. MS. Book of Extracts from Borough Records, op. cit., f. 62.
51. Greaves, op. cit., pp. 77-80; B. Keith-Lucas, The Unreformed Local Government System, (1979), p. 31.
52. Greaves, op. cit., p. 17; Bush, op. cit., pp. 80-1.
53. P.B.A., Uncalendared MSS. Draft Petition for Improved Regulation of the Harbour and Harbour Dues attributed to 1726; Sir John Webb and William Barfoot v. the Corporation of Poole, attributed to 1739.
54. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 370.
55. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., 15th September, 1715; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book 1726-1739, 15th February, 1728, 13th September, 1731, 6th September, 1732; Monthly Meeting Book, 1739-1745, 15th May, 13th June, 23rd June, 1740.
56. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 7th April, 1731; Sydenham, op. cit., p. 371.
57. Mayors' Account Books, op. cit.
58. Ibid.
59. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 7th November, 1739, 1st June, 1743.

60. Ibid, 31st January, 1746.
61. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., f. 288, 3rd December, 1747, f. 308, 2nd October, 1751, ff. 341-2, 4th January, 1764.
62. D.C.R.O., P. 227, CW.2, Poor Rate, 1773.
63. Keith-Lucas, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
64. Benjamin Lester's Diary, 18-19th August, 1762, D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 2; George Garland to John Dent, 26th January, 1821, Garland Letter Book, 1816-26, D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 23.
65. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery, (chiefly in the 17th and 18th centuries)', unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1968, pp. 12-13.
66. W. Daman to Peter Thompson, 7th June, 1744. MS. belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole.
67. For example, George Tito (Mayor 1755 and 1761) and Samuel Bowden (Mayor 1775) were both related to the Phippard family, one of whom had represented the Borough in Parliament in the early 18th century. List of Poole Burgesses, D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2.
68. Paul G.E. Clemens, 'The Rise of Liverpool 1665-1750', Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. XXIX, (1976), pp. 211-225.
69. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 18-19, 23.
70. See, for example, Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 15th January, 1776.
71. Ibid, 19th December, 1774; Thompson Letter Book, op. cit., 1st, 2nd December, 1760.
72. Calculation based on Register of Congregational Church, transcript made by Mr. H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole, and Records of Poole Unitarian Church, D.C.R.O., N3/MS.1/TR.1/CW.1.
73. H.S. Carter, 'Reverend Matthew Towgood', p. 13, Typewritten MS., D.C.R.O., N3/M14; W. Densham and J. Ogle, The Story of the Congregational Churches in Dorset, pp. 187-90.
74. C.G. Bolam, J. Goring, H.L. Short and R. Thomas, The English Presbyterians, (1968), pp. 21-7. In Leeds the majority of Dissenting merchants conformed to the Anglican Church. B.G. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants: the Merchant Community in Leeds 1700-1830, (Manchester, 1971), pp. 182, 186.
75. Carter, op. cit., pp. 4-22; Gough, MSS. Bodleian Library, Oxford; John Howell to Richard Gough, 23/24th February, 25th October, 1779, ff. 277-8, 283; Densham and Ogle, op. cit., pp. 193-201. (The latter erred in assuming that the individuals who formed the Congregational Church were "the families of position and influence". Ibid, p. 196. None of them were contemporary members of the Corporation).

76. D.C.R.O., N3/MS.1/TR.1/CW.1, Records of the Unitarian Church, Poole.
77. Thomis, op. cit., pp. 121, 128-9; E. Basil Short, A Respectable Society, Bridport 1593-1835, (Bradford-on-Avon, 1976), Chapter 5, passim., p. 37.
78. Greaves, op. cit., p. 112. In Southampton too, the exclusion of Dissenters from the Corporation resulted in their becoming "a town opposition". Patterson, op. cit., pp. 119-20.
79. Dissenters have been identified by using the transcripts of the Congregational Church Registers made by H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole and the Records of the Unitarian Church (D.C.R.O., N3). Quakers have been identified by the records of affirmations made in the Corporation Monthly Meeting Books.  
Because of the difficulty involved in identifying Dissenters and Quakers it is possible to draw only tentative conclusions from these figures. The relatively large number of Dissenters admitted up to and including 1751 probably reflects the relative strength and influence of the Dissenters before the final schism in their ranks which occurred in 1759. Their absence from those admitted in 1775 reflects the controversies caused by the agitation of the rate-payers to secure the parliamentary franchise beginning in 1774 and the effect of the American crisis. The Dissenters played a part in the ratepayers' agitation and in opposition to the American War. The decline in the number of Dissenters admitted in 1764 provides a hint that the Corporation was becoming more exclusive in its attitude.  
The Quakers enjoyed a comparatively advantageous position because of the great wealth and standing of the merchant families of the Whites, Nicklesons and Jefferys.
80. See below, pp. 40-1 and Chapter Three, pp. 60-2.
81. John Masters (?1687/88-1755) had prospered in the Newfoundland trade and returned to Poole in 1740 with the ambition of securing control of the Corporation and making himself M.P. for Poole. Derek Beamish, John Hillier and H.F.V. Johnstone, Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset, (Poole, 1976), Vol.I, pp. 121-9.
82. John Masters to Joseph Gulston, 19th November, 1752, op. cit.
83. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., 9th June, 1743; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 8th June, 1748.
84. Poor attendances also occurred at meetings of Southampton Corporation, Patterson, op. cit., p. 21.



85. Wilson, op. cit., p. 163.
86. See Appendix B, Meetings of the Corporation recorded between 1740 and 1835.
87. For example, "July 1st, 1741 at ye George when wrote to the Members of Parlt. to pay Mr. Green"; September 16th, 1757 meeting the Aldermen at the Antelope settling Mr. Tito's account". Mayors' Account Books, op. cit.
88. Keith-Lucas, op. cit., pp. 27-8, 30-1.
89. S.J., 16th January, 1764.
90. Greaves, op. cit., p. 10.
91. Bush, op. cit., p. 33.
92. P.B.A., Old Record Book No.2, Admiralty Book 1550-1834, 1740; 4th July, 1753; 15th August, 1770.
93. See, for example, proceedings concerning the breach of fishing regulations at Petty Sessions, 1748-1834, P.B.A., PSY. 1-42.
94. P.P., XXXVI, (493), 1831-2, Report on Proposed Boundaries, Return of Estimated Superficial Extent in Acres. (By this date the reclamation of mudlands had increased the area of the old Borough to 170 acres).
95. D.F. Beamish, 'Poole: an 18th Century Survey', Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries, Vol.XXIX, Part 297, No. 218, March, 1973, pp. 267-9.
96. Keith-Lucas, op. cit., pp. 16-18.
97. Webbs, op. cit., p. 384.
98. Thomis, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
99. Greaves, op. cit., pp. 20, 26, 32; A. Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester: a History of Leicester 1780-1850, (Leicester, 1954), p.21.
100. Bush, op. cit., p. 6.
101. Ibid, pp. 80-1; Patterson, History of Southampton, Vol.I, pp. 68-9, 124, op. cit.
102. Wilson, op. cit., pp. 163-4.
103. Brian D. White, A History of the Corporation of Liverpool 1835-1914, (Liverpool, 1951), pp. 10-11; Jackson, op. cit., pp. 307, 310-11, 329.
104. Greaves, op. cit., p. 86.
105. Jackson, op. cit., p. 307.
106. Webbs, op. cit., p. 287.
107. Patterson, History of Southampton, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 20.
108. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 1st June, 1726; Robert Crosby to Benjamin Skutt, Mayor of Poole, 2nd June, 1744 (uncalendared MS., P.B.A.); Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 392-4.

109. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 4th April, 1744.
110. R.C. Jarvis, Collected Papers on the Jacobite Risings, (2 vols., Manchester, 1972), Vol.II, p. 313.
111. Dr. Richard Pococke's Travels through England, Camden Society, New Series, XLII, Vol.I, p. 87; Western Flying Post, 14th January, 1746; Deposition of T. Durnford, John Doe on the demise of Sir John Webb v. Mayor, Bailiffs, Burgesses and Commonalty of Poole, 1792, (Uncalendared MS., P.B.A.).
112. Joan Berkeley, Lulworth and the Welds, (Gillingham, 1971), pp. 122-6.
113. P.B.A., Uncalendared MSS., Draft Briefs, Sir John Webb v. the Corporation of Poole and another and Sir John Webb and William Barfoot v. the Corporation of Poole, undated but attributed to 1739.
114. See Chapter One, p. 7.
115. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., 4th September, 1706, 4th June, 1707, 22nd August, 1722; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 6th July, 1726.
116. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 63.
117. Corporation Record Book, op. cit., 9th February, 1742, 6th June, 1744.
118. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 11th February, 1745, 2nd, 18th June, 1748.
119. P.B.A., Quarter Sessions Presentments, 22nd May, 1744, 24th May, 9th August, 18th October, 1745, 30th May, 15th August, 17th October, 1746, 12th February, 16th October, 1747, 13th January, 1748, 16th March, 7th April, 13th October, 1749.
120. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 8th May, 20th July, 1742.
121. Patterson, History of Southampton, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 71-7.
122. 'The Life History of John Masters', MS. attributed to Sir Peter Thompson, D.C.R.O., 2694; Sydenham, op. cit., p. 238.
123. Sir Peter Thompson, F.R.S., F.A.S., (1698-1770) was born in Poole and made his fortune in trade with Hamburg while living in Bermondsey. High Sheriff of Surrey in 1745, he was knighted for presenting a loyal address on the defeat of the Jacobites. M.P. for St. Albans, 1747-54, by the interest of his fellow member, James West, Secretary to the Treasury, with whom he shared his antiquarian interests. Thompson was created a burgess in 1744 and was the leader of the supporters of the administration in Poole Corporation against Masters. John Nichols, Literary Anecdotes of the 18th Century, (9 vols., 1812-15), Vol.V, p. 511;...

123. cont.  
... Vol.IX, Additions to V the Volume, pp. 799-801; Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 447-8; Beamish, Hillier and Johnstone, op. cit., pp. 55-62.
124. Bodleian Library, Tucker MSS., John Tucker to Richard Tucker, 22nd August, 22nd December, 1748; Sir Peter Thompson to William Williams, Mayor of Poole, 1746. MS. belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole.
125. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 16th October, 1749.
126. Commons Journals, XXV, p. 916, 15th December, 1749.
127. Tucker MSS., op. cit., John Tucker to Richard Tucker, 21st August, 16th September, 1746, 12th, 14th March, 1747; Sir Peter Thompson to James West, 11th May, 1747. MS. belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole.
128. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 361.
129. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 22nd May, 1750, 19th November, 1755.
130. Ibid, 7th November, 5th December, 1750.
131. S.J., 19th September, 15th, 22nd October, 5th November, 1753; Sydenham, op. cit., p. 238.
132. S.J., 29th September, 1755.
133. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 5th, 19th November, 1755.
134. Commons Journals, XXVII, p. 359, 15th January, 1756.
135. Ibid, p. 405, 27th January, p. 452, 16th February, 1756; House of Lords Journals, XVIII, p. 521(a), 10th March, p. 525(a), 15th March, p. 528(b), 534(a), 22nd March, p. 580(b), 15th April, 1756.
136. Webbs, op. cit., pp. 394-5; Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 363-4.
137. S. and B. Webb, English Local Government, Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes, (1922), p. 244 and note 2.
138. S. and B. Webb, English Local Government, The Manor and the Borough, op. cit., pp. 394-6.
139. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 6th, 28th October, 1756, 7th May, 6th July, 1757, 12th, 25th October, 6th December, 1758, 3rd January, 1759.
140. Ibid, 3rd November, 1756.
141. Ibid, 2nd February, 7th April, 6th July, 1757, 4th October, 1758.
142. Ibid, 4th December, 1765, 17th May, 1766, 4th February, 6th May, 3rd June, 1767, 22nd March, 6th April, 1768, 18th, 20th July, 2nd September, 1772.
143. P.B.A., Lamp and Watch Book 1757-1786, 13th July, 1757, 17th April, 1759.

144. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 28th July, 1780.
145. P.B.A., Uncalendared MS., Sir John Webb v. the Mayor, Bailiffs, Burgesses and Commonalty of Poole and Lawrence Tulloch, Brief for the Defendants, 1792.
146. P.B.A., Quarter Sessions Presentments, 28th April, 1775. S.J., 29th May, 1775; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 14th June, 1775.
147. P.B.A., Quarter Sessions Presentments, 15th July, 14th October, 1757, 13th January, 7th April, 1758, 12th January, 1759, 16th January, 1761, 23rd January, 16th October, 1767, 13th January, 1769, 12th January, 27th April, 1770.
148. Commons Journals, XXVII, 14th, 26th January, 1756.
149. S. and B. Webb, English Local Government: Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes, op. cit., p. 7; Greaves, op. cit., p. 32.
150. Much of Blandford and Wareham was destroyed by fires in 1731 and 1762 respectively. J. Hutchins, History of Dorset, Vol.I, pp. 80-1, 216-7.
151. Tucker MSS., op. cit., Samuel White to Richard Tucker, 21st January, 1756.
152. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 393, 406-7.
153. P.B.A., Lamp and Watch Book, op. cit. Meetings of the elected Commissioners appear to have been held at regular intervals.
154. Patterson, History of Southampton, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 49-52.
155. See convictions for swearing and cursing at Petty Sessions 1702-1834, P.B.A., PSO. 1-28, and Quarter Sessions Indictments 1623-1834, P.B.A., QSI. 1-274.
156. Mayors' Account Books, op. cit., 1742; Western Flying Post, 24th June, 1754.
157. Bush, op. cit., p. 53.
158. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 10th, 15-16th July, 9-10th August, 1773; D.C.R.O., P. 227, OV.3, Quarter Session Order on Poor Rate, 16th July, 1773.
159. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 21st March, 1774.
160. P.B.A., Quarter Sessions, 17th July, 1761, Presentment of the Mayor "for not levelling the ground in Market St. where a Market House was intended to be built".
161. Ibid, 6th February, 1746.
162. Ibid, 15th July, 1757.
163. Ibid, 14th October, 1757, 13th January, 7th April, 1758.
164. Ibid, 16th July, 15th October, 1773, 15th April, 15th July, 14th October, 1774, 13th January, 28th April, 14th July, 1775, 12th January, 19th April, 19th July, 18th October, 1776, 23rd January, ...

164. cont.  
... 25th July, 17th October, 1777, 16th January, 1st May, 1778.
165. In Leeds, for example, there was some improvement in the manner in which Quarter Sessions responsibilities were carried out in the 18th century. Wilson, op. cit., p. 164.
166. D.C.R.O., P. 227/CW.1., Vestry Minutes, 26th April, 1768.
167. D.C.R.O., P. 227, OV.19., Agreement for building the Workhouse, 20th May, 1739; D.C.R.O., P. 227, CW.2, Vestry Minutes, 21st April, 1772.
168. Keith-Lucas, op. cit., pp. 53-4, 89-90.
169. P.B.A., Uncalendared MS., Survey of Poor Law Provision, 26th September, 1776.
170. Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 24th April, 1753, 5th January, 13th April, 1762, 6th March, 1769.
171. P.B.A., Uncalendared MSS., Attorney General v. the Corporation of Poole at the relation of W. Gaden and others, 1789-1791; S.J., 7th, 14th July, 1755, 6th July, 1767.
172. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 19th May, 28-29th June, 1767.  
(Leeds Corporation reserved the patronage of three churches it controlled for the benefit of the sons and sons-in-law of the merchants in the Corporation. Wilson, op. cit., p. 183).
173. Chapter Five, pp. 116-9.
174. Keith-Lucas, op. cit., p. 154.
175. Ibid, pp. 16-18.
176. One area where the Corporation ceased to be active in the 18th century was the defence of the economic element of "the freedom of the Borough". Attempts to regulate trading or the practice of crafts by 'foreigners' were made up to 1733, (Corporation Monthly Meeting Book 1726-1739, 6th February, 1733). Afterwards such efforts were apparently given up. This happened in most boroughs in the 18th century. Keith-Lucas, op. cit., p. 26; Greaves, op. cit., p. 57; Patterson, History of Southampton, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 23.
177. Webbs, The Manor and the Borough, op. cit., p. 270.
178. Keith-Lucas, op. cit., p. 28.
179. The Court of Record Proceedings Book 1757-1768, P.B.A., 36(14), records on average one case each week between September 1757 and September 1758.
180. Webbs, The Manor and the Borough, op. cit., p. 343; Greaves, op. cit., p. 22.

181. The historian of Liverpool Corporation between 1835 and 1914 makes the point that the unreformed corporation there could not achieve more improvements in the services it provided because of limits on its financial resources. (White, op. cit., pp. 12-14). However, Poole Corporation was one of a comparatively few corporations which had the right to levy rates. (Keith-Lucas, op. cit., pp. 32-3). The Corporation's failure to make use of its right to levy rates was significant in showing how low a priority it accorded to public services.

CHAPTER THREE  
POLITICS AND ELECTIONS 1747-1769

It was not until the by-election of 1765 that a parliamentary election in Poole resulted in a contested poll but the elections held previously were nonetheless significant because of the struggles they involved and the way in which they reflected developments in national as well as local politics.

Local country gentlemen continued to have some influence in the constituency but this was very small compared with the influence of government. The influence of the administration, based on the government electoral interest in the placemen among the electors and the general disposition of the merchant elite to support government for the sake of their trading interests, remained important throughout this period. Poole was described as a "ministerial borough" in a list prepared for Bute in 1760 but as Namier pointed out this exaggerated the degree of government influence in the constituency.<sup>(1)</sup> It was not like the boroughs of Harwich or Orford where the government influence was completely dominant.<sup>(2)</sup> To the contrary, the effectiveness of government influence in Poole declined after 1747. This was caused initially by a strong challenge from within the Corporation made by a merchant who was ambitious to enter Parliament for the Borough. After 1754 its decline continued. This happened partly because the influence was mismanaged and partly because disquiet over the effects of government intervention in Newfoundland on their trading interests prompted many Poole merchants to oppose the administration. As a result, one of the Poole seats was won by an opposition candidate in 1768-9.

Developments in national politics affected the course of elections in Poole. The 1747 and 1754 elections were influenced by the relationship between the Pelham administration and the supporters of the Prince of Wales. The political instability of the 1760s had effects on the elections of 1765 and 1768-9 and contributed to the success of the opposition candidate. The Wilkite agitation had a superficial effect on the by-election of 1769. As elsewhere however, national issues did not figure in elections, which were dominated by personal and local concerns.<sup>(3)</sup>

The General Election of 1747

In this election, held on 2nd July, 1747, Gulston retained his seat but Missing, elected with Gulston in 1741, was replaced by the former member, George Trenchard.<sup>(4)</sup> He was returned as a supporter of

the Pelham administration after Sir Peter Thompson had helped to negotiate a coalition between him and Gulston. This was done with the consent of Thompson's friend, James West, Joint Secretary to the Treasury,<sup>(5)</sup> who had been elected Recorder of Poole with Thompson's aid shortly before.<sup>(6)</sup>

Missing's departure from the Borough was caused in part by his quarrel with Gulston and probably also by his hopes of securing one of the Portsmouth seats.<sup>(7)</sup> Trenchard retained a strong interest in the Corporation through his many relatives who had been reluctant to see him forced out of his seat in 1741 because of his association with Dodington and Dodington's cousin, Thomas Wyndham. Thompson was above all anxious that the administration should retain both of the Poole seats. He himself was standing with West at St. Albans<sup>(8)</sup> and he had offered to assist West to obtain Missing's seat in 1747. When West declined, Thompson and he agreed to put forward Trenchard, evidently feeling that the controversy of 1740-1 should now be forgotten in the interest of securing the constituency for the administration.

There was a pressing need for them to make an arrangement to keep the electoral peace of the Borough because John Masters, the Newfoundland merchant, who had returned to England in 1740 and had made a brief attempt to take one of the Poole seats in 1741, was once more busily engaged in making an interest in the Corporation to ensure his election in 1747.<sup>(9)</sup> Masters had quarrelled with William Keen, the leading advocate of the extension of civil authority in Newfoundland who had himself obtained many offices and considerable power in the island.<sup>(10)</sup> Masters was thus unable to secure the support of government for his ambition to enter Parliament.<sup>(11)</sup> Failing this, he needed an interest with the opposition to Pelham, and it is very likely that he was already in touch with Dodington and the Prince of Wales's party, which had returned to opposition in 1747.<sup>(12)</sup>

Pelham had decided on an early dissolution in 1747 to thwart the Prince of Wales and his strategem was successful throughout the country.<sup>(13)</sup> In Poole, Masters could not complete his preparations. He was forced to give up his attempt to make himself a candidate, after spending £600 or £700,<sup>(14)</sup> and Gulston and Trenchard were returned as Thompson and West had arranged.

This election thus demonstrates the continuing hold government enjoyed over the constituency. The influence which Thompson and West now had over the Corporation meant that the administration was more



firmly in control of the Poole seats than before. In addition to the placemen in the Corporation and the general disposition of the Poole merchants to support government, the ministry profited from the leadership Thompson and West were able to give to its interest in the Borough.<sup>(15)</sup>

Masters's failure in 1747 was proof of the difficulty faced by a would-be parliamentary candidate who lacked the support of government at this time in the 18th century.<sup>(16)</sup> He had wealth, a forceful personality and a background of success in the Newfoundland trade which the Poole merchants could well admire, but all these attributes could not make up for his lack of standing with the administration. While individual merchants naturally suffered losses in the War of Austrian Succession,<sup>(17)</sup> the trade of the port in general flourished during the war<sup>(18)</sup> and there was no groundswell of discontent which Masters could exploit as a protest against the ministry.

#### The General Election of 1754

The election of 1754 saw the retirement of Trenchard, who was replaced by Sir Richard Lyttelton, one of a family group associated with William Pitt.<sup>(19)</sup> Gulston retained the other seat.<sup>(20)</sup>

Masters had continued his campaign to secure one of the Poole seats for himself after his disappointment in 1747,<sup>(21)</sup> and in the years before the election of 1754 the Corporation was convulsed by the struggles between Masters and his opponents as Masters sought to dominate it. By 1750 he was aiming to obtain control over both seats, and reached agreement with Dr. Ayscough, Secretary to the Prince of Wales, that he should be the Prince's candidate at the next election, together with Admiral Thomas Smith, a former governor of Newfoundland, known to many of the Corporation.<sup>(22)</sup>

After the death of the Prince in 1751, and the subsequent collapse of his party when the Dowager Princess sided with Pelham,<sup>(23)</sup> Masters continued to hope for one of the seats for himself. Because there was now no opposition group to which he could attach himself he was forced to proclaim his loyalty to the administration and to try to convince Gulston that his best interests would be served by making a coalition with Masters against Trenchard.<sup>(24)</sup>

Despite the resistance of the supporters of the ministry, including the placemen,<sup>(25)</sup> Masters and his "free and independent burgesses" achieved a powerful position in the Corporation. He carried the election of both the Mayor and the Sheriff in October 1753 as a preliminary to the general election of 1754, but it proved to be Pyrrhic victory because of

the law suit his opponents then started against the extraordinary methods he had employed in the election.

Partly because of this and also because of the government's intervention Masters was unable to come forward himself in 1754. Lyttelton replaced Trenchard by agreement with Pelham, who appointed Trenchard's son as a Commissioner of Taxes in return for Trenchard's consent to retire and give his interest to Lyttelton.<sup>(26)</sup> Lyttelton, with Pitt and the Grenvilles, had been on the point of joining the Prince of Wales when the Prince died, and the favour Pelham granted to him was given to assist the rapprochement between the Old Corps of Whigs and the dissident groups.<sup>(27)</sup> Lyttelton was the half brother of Admiral Smith,<sup>(28)</sup> who, with Masters, had presumably made Lyttelton aware of the opportunity in Poole.

The result of the 1754 election in Poole was however arranged by the ministry, and despite all his efforts to promote his own interest, Masters was forced to content himself with leading the support for Lyttelton in the Corporation. The administration continued to control the constituency and because Masters still had no firm standing with government his ambition to represent the Borough came to nothing.

However, while the most significant aspect of this election is the manner in which the Poole seat was disposed of by the administration to suit its needs, the circumstances Masters had created in the constituency helped to shape the government's action. Undoubtedly his campaign against Trenchard contributed to the latter's willingness to retire from Poole. The very strong position Masters had obtained in the Corporation meant that it was necessary for Pelham to arrange that the seat should be given to one of those politicians hovering on the brink of opposition with Pitt rather than a more dependable supporter of the ministry.

Government influence in Poole was therefore less effective in 1754 than it had been in 1747 because of the degree of success Masters had attained in control of the Corporation. There is some evidence that he attracted the support he did partly because of the continuing fear among the merchants that the government intended to extend civil authority in Newfoundland,<sup>(29)</sup> but since the end of the War of Austrian Succession was followed by a boom in the Newfoundland fisheries<sup>(30)</sup> it is unlikely that his supporters were generally motivated by any precise grievance against the administration. His success thus depended largely on his own forceful determination and probably his ability to buy support. It nevertheless illustrates the willingness of some of the Corporation to oppose the government influence in the Borough, a tendency that had become apparent in the late 1730s and early 1740s.

As Namier pointed out, the government interest in a borough "like all electoral influences, was changing and shifting ... developing when looked after or decaying rapidly when neglected".<sup>(31)</sup> At this time the government interest in Poole had not decayed from neglect, as the resistance made by its supporters in the Corporation to Masters indicates. It was however forced to shift its ground a little because of the force of the attack Masters mounted against it.

#### The General Election of 1761

The election of 25th March, 1761 again resulted in the return of Gulston. Lyttelton retired and was replaced by Colonel Thomas Calcraft, the younger brother of John Calcraft, the army agent.<sup>(32)</sup>

John Calcraft had bought Rempstone House in the Isle of Purbeck in 1757<sup>(33)</sup> with part of the great fortune he had made from the services he performed for the officers of numerous regiments. Both as an army agent and the right-hand man of Henry Fox he was well versed in borough-mongering<sup>(34)</sup> and alive to the opportunities his new estate would bring to establish electoral interests in neighbouring boroughs. By November 1760 he was cultivating an interest in Poole for his brother to succeed Sir Richard Lyttelton.<sup>(35)</sup>

Lyttelton, who had followed Pitt into opposition in 1755 and had become Master of the Jewel Office when Pitt came into office in 1756, was forced by ill health to spend long periods abroad from 1757.<sup>(36)</sup> It was doubtful if he would wish to be re-elected and in November 1760 a group of the Corporation invited Calcraft to stand in his place.<sup>(37)</sup> Lyttelton's cousin, James Grenville was reluctant to see the seat lost to Calcraft and Fox, but after visiting Poole concluded that it could not be saved.<sup>(38)</sup> Once Lyttelton had made clear his wish to retire, Calcraft had no difficulty in persuading the Corporation to accept his brother, who was elected in his absence on active service.<sup>(39)</sup>

Although Gulston was re-elected in 1761, for the first time since 1741 he encountered opposition. Thompson reported to James West in January 1761 that "without better management, Mr Gulston cannot poll 10 in-burgesses exclusive of the Officers of the Customs which are 11 or 12".<sup>(40)</sup> Shortly afterwards he told John Tucker "that the Independent Electors were divided whether to write to Mr Fox or Mr Secretary Pitt" to send another candidate to join Calcraft.<sup>(41)</sup> Thompson himself was encouraging Ralph Willett, a local landowner, to come forward as a candidate against Gulston.<sup>(42)</sup> Nothing came of this opposition to Gulston in 1761 however because he apparently convinced the administration that he retained a majority amongst the electors. West then persuaded the leader of Gulston's opponents to accept him.<sup>(43)</sup>

The election of 1761 in the country as a whole was noted for its lack of controversy<sup>(44)</sup> and there is no indication that there were any clear issues in the Poole election other than the competence of the former members. Although the early years of the Seven Years War had brought serious losses to Poole merchants from privateers, between 1759 and 1762 the Newfoundland trade flourished and the merchants had special reasons to join in the general pleasure at the success of the war.<sup>(45)</sup> Not surprisingly then, the result of the election in Poole again showed the willingness of the Corporation to defer to the wishes of government. In contrast to Masters, Calcraft had been able to build up a successful interest in the Corporation in a short time because of his closeness to the Paymaster General, Fox.<sup>(46)</sup> Despite his unpopularity, Gulston survived the election because of his connection with Newcastle.

The course of this election does indicate however that the Corporation was becoming more demanding of attention from the Borough's representatives. Gulston was accused of neglecting the town's interests by failing to attend the Commons when the Bill amending the 1756 Poole Turnpike Act was before the House in June 1757.<sup>(47)</sup> Lyttelton's prolonged absences from the country from 1757 had evidently prevented him from being an effective representative of the Borough's interests and the evidence suggests that it was on the initiative of some members of the Corporation, rather than Calcraft's, that the question of Lyttelton's replacement was raised.<sup>(48)</sup> When James Grenville visited the town to canvass for his cousin he disappointed those members of the Corporation he saw by not offering to pay any of the Corporation's debts or the law bills which two of the leading burgesses had incurred in the struggle against Masters.<sup>(49)</sup> Calcraft's known wealth, and his generosity in the 1761 election,<sup>(50)</sup> promised more satisfaction for the needs of the Corporation and its individual members.

The Corporation's success in establishing its right to the port dues by the 1756 Act had not resulted in any slackening in its expectations from the town's members. Instead, it was becoming more sensitive to any neglect of its needs.

#### The By-Election of 1765

Age and ill health forced Gulston to resign in May 1765 in favour of his son, Joseph Gulston Junior.<sup>(51)</sup> The by-election was contested by Joshua Mauger, the nephew of a Jersey sea-captain who had settled in Poole. Mauger had prospered from navy contracts in Nova Scotia, became "the economic overlord of the Halifax merchants",<sup>(52)</sup> and on his return to England in 1761 was accepted by the Board of Trade as the spokesman for

Nova Scotia, even though he and his associates there were at odds with the Governor of the colony.<sup>(53)</sup> The poll held on 30th May resulted in Gulston's election by 43 votes to 41.<sup>(54)</sup>

Gulston entered this contest with considerable disadvantages. His father's unpopularity had grown since the election of 1761, partly because John Calcraft, who looked after the Borough for his brother, had shown himself to be more assiduous and successful in attending to its needs than Gulston. This was demonstrated very clearly when the French attacked Newfoundland in June 1762, capturing St. Johns and some of the fishing stations where Poole merchants were established.<sup>(55)</sup> Because of his intimacy with Fox, Calcraft was able to supply news and assist with the petitions for the recapture of Newfoundland sent up by the horrified merchants in Poole. In contrast, Gulston, presumably through age or ill health, apparently did nothing to respond to their distress.<sup>(56)</sup> Calcraft also appears to have become the principal intermediary in requests for government patronage from individuals in the town until he went into opposition in 1764.<sup>(57)</sup>

Gulston's very youthful son<sup>(58)</sup> also compared unfavourably with Mauger in his personality and background. A sickly and spoilt child, at Eton he was "indolent in the extreme and possessed no application", and while in Hamburg, where he was sent to learn business, "he spent his days in harmless dissipation".<sup>(59)</sup> In contrast, Mauger, whose self-made success included smuggling and privateering,<sup>(60)</sup> was an individual to be admired by many of the Poole electors.<sup>(61)</sup> He had begun to recommend himself to them by taking up the cause of compensation for those merchants who had incurred losses during the French invasion of Newfoundland.<sup>(62)</sup> Ten days before the election Thompson told West that 4/5 of the most wealthy burgesses were opposed to Gulston.<sup>(63)</sup>

Despite these handicaps, Gulston claimed to have the support of the Grenville administration and in the poll received the votes of 10 of the 12 placemen.<sup>(64)</sup> He was also supported by Thomas Erle Drax, of Charborough, who had deserted Newcastle for Grenville, and had influence over three or four electors.<sup>(65)</sup> The Trenchard interest voted for Gulston as well.<sup>(66)</sup> The support Gulston obtained from these non-resident electors was instrumental in bringing him his narrow victory since the 74 resident voters were split equally between Gulston and his opponent.<sup>(67)</sup> Making allowances for the 10 placemen who supported him, it was clear that the majority of the resident voters were opposed to Gulston. Sir Peter Thompson, one of the most respected members of the Corporation, had originally intended to oppose Gulston, or abstain, but eventually voted for him when the poll was tied because he disapproved of the manner in

which his opponents had so quickly rallied to Mauger and the Sheriff had favoured Mauger. After the poll he was attacked by a mob of Mauger's supporters for being instrumental in securing Gulston's return.<sup>(68)</sup>

Government influence, through the resident placemen and the Drax and Trenchard interests, was thus responsible for Gulston's eventual success. Its management was however less effective than in previous elections. Mauger also claimed to have the support of Grenville and Halifax, then Secretary of State, and it is evident that there was confusion in the Grenville administration over the standing of the two candidates with the ministry.<sup>(69)</sup> Grenville's administration lacked the power to give the effective attention to matters of patronage Newcastle and his aides had been accustomed to provide. This was one of the major reasons for Grenville's quarrel with the King. By the time of this election his administration was in the last weeks of its life.<sup>(70)</sup>

Indeed, Thompson thought that had James West resigned the Recordership to John Bond, as the Corporation had suggested in 1759,<sup>(71)</sup> West's son could have been elected "for the placemen would have been staggered and I am certain many who voted for Mr. Mauger would have voted for him and I think some who voted for Mr. Gulston would have done the same and further I think Mr. Jocelyn Pickard would have had the Trenchard interest that way."<sup>(72)</sup> The confusion in national politics in the 1760s made it more difficult for government influence to be pressed as effectively as in the days of Walpole and Pelham, and made it easier for independent candidates, or candidates with very slender connections with the shifting groups in power, to emerge and stand a chance of success in elections.<sup>(73)</sup> Mauger's narrow defeat, and Thompson's view of the prospects of West's son illustrate the early stages of this development.

The state of the Newfoundland trade in the mid-1760s also had some influence on the result of this election. The Newfoundland merchants had welcomed the end of the Seven Years War. British merchants had by then extended their fisheries into new areas in the north of Newfoundland and Labrador, and with the virtual destruction of the French fishery during the war enjoyed a near monopoly of the European markets during and immediately after the war.<sup>(74)</sup> However, the Newfoundland merchants were hostile to the concession of fishing rights to the French in the Peace of Paris.<sup>(75)</sup> Friction arose between the British and the French in Newfoundland after the war and some merchants were concerned at the rapid recovery of the French fishery.<sup>(76)</sup> There was anxiety too over the tentative steps taken by the Grenville administration to improve the government of Newfoundland, especially in the collection of customs duties.<sup>(77)</sup>

It is thus very likely that Mauger, a merchant with experience in manipulating government in Nova Scotia, who had already shown himself sympathetic to the particular needs of the Poole merchants, attracted some votes because of their uneasiness over these matters where the government appeared to be neglecting or opposing their commercial interests.

While there was ambiguity about Mauger's standing with the administration, the behaviour of the resident placemen and the Drax and Trenchard interests in supporting Gulston shows that he was clearly regarded as the government candidate. The strong support Mauger gained from the resident voters was therefore evidence of a significant increase in the number of independent minded voters who were willing to oppose the government influence in the Borough.

Their motives in opposing Gulston were mixed. He was clearly at a disadvantage because of his personality and background. Some of his opponents were venal electors.<sup>(78)</sup> But he was opposed by many of the leading burgesses who would not be influenced by bribes. Their willingness to vote against the individual most clearly identified as the ministerial candidate meant that government influence in Poole was in danger of losing control over one of the seats. The government electoral interest was still virtually intact but government influence over the electors outside it had decreased significantly by 1765. The administration needed a more convincing candidate than Gulston. It also had to reassure those electors who feared for the future of the Newfoundland trade.

#### The General Election of 1768 and the By-Election of 1769

These elections resulted in a marked departure from the previous pattern of parliamentary representation in Poole, which had returned two members supporting the current administration since 1722. In 1768 Mauger, standing as an opposition candidate apparently supported by Newcastle and Rockingham,<sup>(79)</sup> was able to defeat Gulston by 57 votes to 49, obtaining as many as 20 "plumper" votes.<sup>(80)</sup> After being unseated by his opponents' petition alleging bribery and intimidation,<sup>(81)</sup> he was victorious in the subsequent by-election in February 1769 because Gulston gave up the contest when it appears that Mauger had 45 firm promises against 43 for his opponent.<sup>(82)</sup> Calcraft, who stood jointly with Gulston<sup>(83)</sup> as a supporter of the government, was returned in 1768 with 59 votes.

In both elections the government interest was in some disarray. Calcraft received its solid support in 1768 but it was divided between Gulston and Mauger. In 1768, 7 of the 14 placemen who voted supported Mauger and in 1769 6 voted for him.<sup>(84)</sup>

The elections were also marked by much venality amongst the electors, which was hardly surprising in view of the determination and wealth of Calcraft and Mauger in particular, and the fact that until 1765 the electors had not enjoyed the added opportunities for receiving bribes provided by contested polls. From Calcraft's election notes it is possible to identify 13 voters who accepted money bribes.<sup>(85)</sup> They included William Knapp, the Parish Clerk, who at first asked for a modest £10 to vote for Gulston and subsequently accepted £40 from Mauger to 'plump' for him. Joseph Wadham, an aged member of the Corporation in reduced circumstances received £200 from Mauger, and his daughter remarked that "Providence was very kind in (bringing) such opportunities to provide for him".<sup>(86)</sup> When it was impossible to trust those electors who had taken bribes they were removed from the town and put in safe-keeping until they could be brought to the poll. Other burgesses received concealed bribes. Both Calcraft and Mauger bought ships from electors at inflated prices.<sup>(87)</sup> Calcraft and Gulston were generous to the Corporation as a body and provided a further £1,000 towards the cost of the new Guildhall.<sup>(88)</sup> It was however Calcraft and Mauger who showed the greater resourcefulness and willingness to spend freely. One of Gulston's supporters alleged that he could have carried the 1769 election if he had been willing to spend another £1,200.<sup>(89)</sup>

A particular feature of the by-election in 1769 was the manner in which Wilkite symbols were freely used. The figure '45', happily coinciding with the number of Mauger's firm supporters, was prominently displayed,<sup>(90)</sup> and Mauger's triumph was celebrated as a victory for "the friends to liberty and independency".<sup>(91)</sup>

The true significance of the Wilkite element in the 1769 election is very limited however. Dr. Brewer has argued that "an indigenous political culture" was able to emerge in the 1760s and 1770s and gain definition by focussing on the issues raised by Wilkes and the American War.<sup>(92)</sup> While he admits that this "focussed radicalism" did not have a serious impact in parliamentary elections, except in the metropolis, he nevertheless takes Professor Rude to task for his cautious appraisal of the widespread support for Wilkes.<sup>(93)</sup> Professor Shelton's study of the 1760s, in which he emphasises the significance of social conflict in the "new polarisation of class attitudes"<sup>(94)</sup> which was emerging during this decade provides some support for Dr. Brewer's more emphatic view of developing radicalism in that it suggests that fundamental changes in society were encouraging the acceptance of radical ideas.



Examination of the Wilkite element in the 1769 election however supports the cautious view of the true significance of such manifestations of Wilkes's popularity taken by Rudé and Dame Lucy Sutherland.<sup>(95)</sup> It was hardly surprising that the electors of Poole were aware of Wilkes's renewed struggles in the metropolis. Quite apart from the national interest shown in him, Thomas Calcraft, his brother and Mauger had all given public support to Wilkes for their own ends.<sup>(96)</sup> If there were convinced supporters of Wilkes in the town at this time they would have been amongst Mauger's supporters but analysis of the likely motives of the majority of his adherents fails to reveal any such true radicals. It is possible to suggest the motives of 28 of his 45 supporters.<sup>(97)</sup> Nine were venal electors, like James Allen, "a pecuniary one", three were discontented placemen, two aspired to be Mayor and Sheriff respectively, two were relatives of Mauger, two were his business associates, four were members of one extensive merchant family, the Jolliffes, and six were from the Lester family or burgesses under their influence. Probably only one of Mauger's supporters in 1768-9 was subsequently to favour the Commonalty group of ratepayers in their struggle to obtain admission to the Corporation and the parliamentary franchise which began in the general election of 1774.<sup>(98)</sup>

There are indications of polarization in local society in the 1760s but this did not affect the labouring poor and arise from the unrest over food supplies or in industry studied by Professor Shelton. In contrast to the experience of much of southern England, the town had no food riots in 1766 and there is no evidence of any pronounced economic distress in 1768-9.<sup>(99)</sup> The hardening of social attitudes that was to help provoke the later emergence of the Commonalty group in Poole came by contrast from the general prosperity enjoyed by the port in the period 1750-1770.<sup>(100)</sup> In these years numerous smaller or 'middling' merchants and tradesmen prospered but found that the merchant elite which dominated the Corporation were unwilling to admit sufficient of their number to the privileges of burgesses. These men were of the same status as the citizens of the metropolis who were strongest in support of Wilkes<sup>(101)</sup> but in Poole their sense of grievance against their betters in the Corporation was not yet fully developed.

Prosperous though it was, the port had not reached the stage of development of London and thus did not yet possess "the predisposing conditions for the development of Radicalism as a political force".<sup>(102)</sup> Moreover, the Corporation had admitted 30 new members, including some representatives of these 'middling men', as recently as 1764 and there were prospects in 1768-9 that further admissions would soon be made.

Inasmuch as any grievance existed at this time it was a local grievance which could be met locally and while it is likely that it was afterwards encouraged to grow in a general manner by the Wilkite agitation in the country in 1768-9 it cannot be regarded as a sign of "focussed radicalism" in the sense in which Dr. Brewer uses the term.<sup>(103)</sup> The Wilkite agitation had only a superficial influence on the 1769 contest in Poole.

Nationally, the election of 1768 was more than usually lacking in clear issues because of the confusion in politics and the consequent instability of administrations which culminated in Chatham's failure to achieve a 'national' administration in 1766-7.<sup>(104)</sup> As in 1765 however the uneasiness amongst Poole merchants over the future of government in Newfoundland continued to prompt some of them to vote for Mauger. As a body, they had not joined in the outcry against the consequences of the Stamp Act or the Townsend duties on American trade<sup>(105)</sup> in which only a minority of Poole merchants had direct interest, but they were more and more concerned at the marked increase in government intervention in the administration of Newfoundland in the 1760s, which seemed inimical to their interests.<sup>(106)</sup>

The political instability of the 1760s also profited Mauger. Dr. Brewer has sought to attribute greater significance to the political instability of this decade than it has previously been given, by arguing that it represented the end of a political consensus, a Whig hegemony, which had hitherto imposed a stranglehold on local political conflicts.<sup>(107)</sup> Dr. Clark's criticisms of his basic assumptions about the state of party politics in the 1750s and of his historical method throw doubt on the validity of the emphasis Dr. Brewer gives to the significance of political instability.<sup>(108)</sup> In any case, it is not necessary to accept his thesis in order to understand how independent, or opposition candidates such as Mauger, were able to achieve success at this time. "The period of short-lived ministries, from 1762 to 1770, was pre-eminently a period of personal politics".<sup>(109)</sup> In these circumstances political groupings in the Commons constantly formed and disintegrated as the fortunes of their leaders flourished and declined. Individual members, who had always enjoyed much freedom of action, now had more. As political loyalties now grew and decayed more frequently they were looser and there were greater opportunities for men like Mauger to secure seats and retain them. He had received the endorsement of Newcastle and Rockingham at his election, and yet, as Namier points out, his relationship with them was not at all close.<sup>(110)</sup> During his parliamentary career, he invariably sided with the opposition but cannot be associated with any one of the opposition leaders. At the same time he was able to secure government favour for his interests in Nova Scotia.

The general decline in the effectiveness of the administration's ability to control parliamentary elections in the late 18th century was also important in explaining Mauger's success. Of the explanations which have been advanced for this decline, three have a bearing on the state of government influence in Poole. They are: the decline in the number of placemen in the Commons,<sup>(111)</sup> the increasing wealth of private individuals in relation to government expenditure<sup>(112)</sup> and the negligence of ministers (which is related in part to the short-lived nature of ministries in the 1760s).<sup>(113)</sup>

The first and second explanations can only be applied tentatively. It is possible that Gulston's status as an administration candidate suffered because he enjoyed no place or particular favour from government, unlike his father. The second explanation can be supported by reference to Mauger's wealth and his willingness to spend freely during the elections. Indeed, the manner in which he exploited his wealth gained from his powerful interest in Nova Scotia to obtain a parliamentary seat, and then used his position to defend his interest, made him resemble the nabobs who were making their appearance in the Commons during this decade.<sup>(114)</sup>

The third explanation is more cogent however. Chatham himself was opposed to Treasury interference in elections, and Grafton's indolence made him only too happy to adopt this attitude, with the result that opposition candidates gained some ground from the government in the 1768 election.<sup>(115)</sup> Chatham's great concern in the 1760s was to retrieve and embellish his reputation as 'the True Patriot' and this particular aspect of his patriot attitude increased political instability<sup>(116)</sup> by providing greater opportunities for men like Mauger to win elections.

The other administration candidate, Thomas Calcraft, was however supported by the government interest despite Grafton's mis-handling of the election. The explanation for this must lie in John Calcraft's consummate artistry in the management of elections.<sup>(117)</sup> His loyalty to Chatham did not extend to accepting his hostility to the use of government influence as his preparations for the 1768 election in Poole and its aftermath reveal. Any connections between individual electors and government departments were meticulously recorded in his lists, and pressure was used where necessary to keep placemen obedient.<sup>(118)</sup> At the same time, Grafton's defective management of the government interest allowed the placemen greater freedom to discriminate between the two administration candidates and to prefer Calcraft to Gulston on the grounds of personality and status.

Mauger was successful in 1768-9 because he was a more attractive candidate than Gulston and because he was able to exploit the opportunities which ministerial instability and neglect of government electoral influence presented. He also profited from the increasingly critical attitude towards government adopted by many of the town's merchants.

The government electoral interest remained potentially useful, provided it was managed properly, but government influence over Poole had declined significantly since 1761 because of resentment over the trend in the conduct of the administration of Newfoundland by the government. Their halting steps to rationalise the administration of the island and the fisheries was an aspect of the concern over the problems of Empire felt by each of the ministries of the 1760s, although they were principally interested of course in the problems involving the mainland colonies of North America. (119)

The gradual nature of the changes government sought to make in Newfoundland helps explain the slow reaction of the Newfoundland merchants to them. However, a more important reason for the gradual manner in which their opposition to government gathered strength lay in their unwillingness to oppose the administration of the day. The merchants were always mindful that their success in a difficult trade was ultimately dependent on the goodwill of the current ministry, as the French invasion of Newfoundland in 1762 showed very forcibly. Their increasing disagreement with the extension of administration in Newfoundland emphasized the ambivalence which had always existed in their view of the relationship between government and their trade. On the one hand they recognised the need to stand well with the administration to secure the protection of their interests. On the other hand, they were willing to criticise, or even oppose government when it appeared to be acting contrary to these interests. By 1768-9 the tendency for them to oppose the administration had grown stronger, but it was still balanced by a desire to preserve a link with government. In returning one supporter of the ministry and one opponent the merchants secured the best of both worlds.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER THREE

1. L. Namier, England in the Age of the American Revolution, p. 152 and note 1.
2. John Brooke, The House of Commons 1754-1790: Introductory Survey, (Oxford, 1968), p. 79.
3. Ibid, pp. 91-2, 98.
4. Romney Sedgewick, ed., The History of Parliament, The House of Commons, 1715-1754, Vol.I, p. 236.
5. Sir Peter Thompson to James West, 17th May, 1747. MS. belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole.
6. Corporation Record Book, 1702-1816, ff. 280-2, 4th March, 1746.
7. Sedgewick, op. cit.; N.W. Surry and J.H. Thomas, eds., Book of Original Entries 1731-1751, Portsmouth Record Series III, 1977, pp. liv-v.
8. Sedgewick, op. cit., Vol.II, pp. 466-7.
9. D.C.R.O., 2694, MS. 'Life History of John Masters', attributed to Sir Peter Thompson.
10. K. Matthews, 'William Keen' in The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol.III, pp. 323-4.
11. The Treasury opposed Masters's contracting to victual the garrison at St. Johns, Newfoundland, between 1744 and 1745. Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1742-1745, pp. 526, 592, 722.
12. A.S. Foord, His Majesty's Opposition 1714-1830, (Oxford, 1964), pp. 261-2.
13. Ibid, p. 266.
14. 'Life History of John Masters', op. cit.
15. Thompson's opposition to Masters was not only caused by his concern to keep the constituency loyal to the administration. There was personal rivalry between him and Masters and Thompson himself had ambitions to sit for Poole. Bodleian Library, Tucker MSS., John Tucker to Richard Tucker, 21st August, 16th September, 1746.
16. Brooke, op. cit., p. 68.
17. Tucker MSS., op. cit., Samuel White to John Tucker, 26th March, 1744, 3rd January, 1746.
18. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery (chiefly in the 17th and 18th centuries)', Oxford University, unpublished D.Phil. thesis, 1968, pp. 380-1.

19. Maud Wyndham, Chronicles of the Eighteenth Century, (2 vols., 1924), Vol.I, p. 112; L. Namier and J. Brooke, eds., The History of Parliament, The House of Commons 1754-90, (3 vols., 1964), Vol.III, p. 75. Sir Richard Lyttelton (1718-1770) was a cousin to Lord Temple and related to Pitt by marriage. Entering the army in 1737, he became a colonel in 1747, major-general in 1757 and lieutenant-general in 1759. He was M.P. for Brackley 1747-54.
20. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 267.
21. 'Life History of John Masters', op. cit.
22. Wyndham, op. cit., p. 63; Aubrey N. Newman, ed., 'Leicester House Politics, 1750-1760, from the Papers of John, Second Earl of Egmont', Camden Miscellany, (4th Series, Vol.7), Vol.XXIII, pp. 133, 172. Admiral Thomas Smith (c.1707-1762) was the illegitimate son of Sir Thomas Lyttelton. He was Governor of Newfoundland in 1741 and 1743.
23. Foord, op. cit., p. 279.
24. University of Nottingham, Newcastle (Clumber) MSS., Nec 512, 513, John Masters to Joseph Gulston, 21st September, 5th, 21st October, 1751, 19th November, 1752.
25. P.B.A., Mathews Collection, Poll for Mayor 1751, 1752.
26. B.L. Add. MSS., (Newcastle Papers) 32734, f. 346, George Trenchard to James West, 25th March, 1754; B.L. Add. MSS., (Liverpool Papers), 38, 335, f. 55.
27. Foord, op. cit., p. 265; J.D.C. Clark, 'The Decline of Party 1740-1760', E.H.R., Vol.XCIII, (1978), pp. 499-527.
28. Wyndham, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 140, 163; Vol.II, p. 63.
29. In 1752 the Newfoundland merchants in Poole sent up a memorial "praying that a civil government may not be established" in Newfoundland. Journal of the Committee for Trade and Plantations, January, 1749/50-December 1753, Vol.60, p. 367, November 22nd, 1752.
30. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 384-6.
31. L. Namier, The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III, p. 140.
32. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 268; Vol.II, p. 175. Thomas Calcraft (1738-1783) had entered the army in 1753 and owed his rapid promotion to his brother.
33. B.L. Add. MSS., 17493, (John Calcraft's Letter Book, Vol.I), f. 94, John Calcraft to Mr. Ayliff, 8th September, 1757.
34. B.L. Add. MSS., 51348, (Holland House Papers, Vol.XXI), f. 161, John Calcraft to Ilchester, 16th October, 1753; 51398, (Holland House Papers, Vol.LXXXI), ff.8-9, Calcraft to Henry Fox, 1st April, 1751.

35. B.L. Add. MSS., 17495, f. 171, John Calcraft to Mr. Bishop. 13th November, 1760. (As early as 1758 he was taking an interest in Corfe Castle, the nearest borough to Rempstone).
36. Wyndham, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 124, Vol.II, p. 223; W. Stanhope Taylor and J.H. Pringle, eds., The Correspondence of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, (4 vols., 1838-40), Vol.I, pp. 156, 188, 192, 471-2, Vol.II, pp. 121-4.
37. Sir Peter Thompson Letter Book, 1760-1764, 6th December, 1760, MS. Letter Book belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole.
38. Ibid, 24th, 29th December, 1760, 3rd January, 1761.
39. Ibid, 31st December, 1760, 1st, 12th, 14th January, 1761.
40. Ibid, 17th January, 1761.
41. Ibid, 24th January, 1761.
42. Ibid, 31st January, 14th February, 2nd, 21st March, 1761. Ralph Willett (1719-1795), was the son of a West Indian planter who had bought the Merley estate, about 6 miles from Poole, in 1751. A.J. Miller, 'Living off slaves at Merley', Dorset, the county magazine, No.92, (1981), pp. 29-33.
43. B.L. Add. MSS., 32918 (Newcastle Papers), f. 170, James West to Newcastle, 31st January, 1761.
44. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 91-2.
45. Matthews, op. cit., p. 388.
46. B.L. Add. MSS., 32915 (Newcastle Papers), f. 172, Henry Fox to Newcastle, 29th November, 1760.
47. Thompson Letter Book, op. cit., 6th, 20th December, 1760; Commons Journals, XXVII, 23rd December, 1756, 7th January, 17th February, 29th March, 25th April, 5th May, 1757.
48. Calcraft first mentioned Poole in his letter to a Mr. Bishop on 11th November, 1760, op. cit. Bishop had evidently told Calcraft that there was the prospect of a seat in Poole and nominated a Poole attorney, John Oliver, as the intermediary to be used.
49. Thompson Letter Book, op. cit., 29th December, 1760.
50. Thompson calculated that Calcraft spent £250 when he visited the town in January 1761. Letter Book, op. cit., 15th January, 1761. He also agreed with Gulston to pay £1,500 for a new Guildhall. P.B.A., Corporation Record Book 1702-1816, 25th March, 1761.
51. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 268-9.
52. J.B. Brebner, The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: a Marginal Colony during the Revolutionary Years, (Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 276.

53. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, pp. 119-20; Donald F. Chard, 'Joshua Mauger' in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol.IV, 1771-1800, pp. 525-7; Brebner, op. cit., pp. 19-22, 70, 78-9, 81-89.
54. S.J., 10th June, 1765.
55. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 2, Benjamin Lester's Diary, 28th June-9th August, 1762; Thompson Letter Book, op. cit., 20th July, 1762.
56. Thompson Letter Book, op. cit., 24th July; B.L. Add. MSS., 38, 199, (Liverpool Papers), f. 79-80, John Oliver to John Calcraft, 24th July, 1762.
57. Thompson Letter Book, op. cit., 31st March, 3rd April, 1762, 30th July, 13th, 22nd August, 1763; B.L. Add. MSS., 17496, f. 1, Calcraft to Thomas Hyde, 19th March, 1763, f. 21, Calcraft to Thompson, 29th October, 1763, Calcraft to the Mayor of Poole, 9th January, 1764.
58. Joseph Gulston (1745/6-1786), M.P. for Poole 1765-68, 1780-84. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.II, pp. 561-2.
59. John Nichols, Illustrations of the Literary History of the 18th Century, Vol.V, pp. 24-6.
60. George Mullane, 'The Privateers of Nova Scotia 1756-1783', Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections, 20, (1921), pp. 17-42.
61. One Poole man who profited greatly from Mauger's patronage was Michael Franklin (1733-1782), the son of the Mayor 1736-38. He became Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia in 1766. W.B. Kerr, 'The Rise of Michael Franklin', Dalhousie Review, XIII, (1934), pp. 489-95.
62. Thompson Letter Book, op. cit., 25th October, 1762.
63. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 269.
64. Ibid.
65. J.R.G. Tomlinson, ed., Additional Grenville Papers 1763-1765, (Manchester, 1962), pp. 107-8.
66. Thompson to West, 5th June, 1765, op. cit. (After Trenchard's death in 1758 this interest was headed by his son-in-law, Jocelyn Pickard).
67. Ibid.
68. Thompson to West, 22nd June, 1765. MS. belonging to H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole.
69. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 269.
70. Peter D.G. Thomas, 'George Grenville', in Herbert Van Thal, ed., The Prime Ministers, (2 vols., 1974-5), Vol.I, pp. 122-3.
71. West had evidently not attended Quarter Sessions regularly enough for the Corporation. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 269.



72. Thompson to West, 5th June, 1765, op. cit.
73. Dr. Brooke notes that in the 1774 election the administration had difficulty in carrying some government boroughs and that an independent party at Portsmouth nearly succeeded in taking the seat. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 115-6. However, he prefers to stress the rise of party as the main reason for the weakening of the government's electoral influence. Ibid, p. 291.
74. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 391-3.
75. G.J. Davies, 'England and Newfoundland: Policy and Trade 1660-1783', unpublished Southampton University Ph.D. thesis, 1980, pp. 135-6.
76. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 395-6; Davies, op. cit., pp. 157-8.
77. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 439-441.
78. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 269.
79. Ibid, Vol.I, p. 268. (The relevant letter B.L. Add. MSS., 32,989, f. 250 is wrongly dated by Namier; the correct date is 24th March, 1768).
80. D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2, MS., Poll Book, 1768.
81. Commons Journals, XXXII, pp. 31, 55-6, 197-8.
82. D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2, Thomas Hyde to John Calcraft, 18th February, 1769; Benjamin Lester's Diary, op. cit., 17th-18th February, 1769.
83. Calcraft and Gulston shared some of the election expenses, Mr. Oliver's Account 1768, D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2.
84. Poll Book, 1768, op. cit.; S.J., 20th February, 1769.
85. D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2/3, Lists of Poole electors; Draft Case: Petition v. Thomas Calcraft, Memorandum on Last General Election, Petition of Gulston v. Mauger.
86. Memorandum on Last General Election, op. cit.
87. Draft Case Petition v. Thomas Calcraft, Petition of Gulston, v. Mauger, op. cit.
88. D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2, John Green to Joseph Gulston, 21st May, 1768, George Tito to Gulston, 3rd May, 1768; P.B.A., 200 (B7), Minutes of Proceedings and Incidents at the Elections.
89. D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2, John Skinner to John Calcraft, 18th February, 1769.
90. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 3, Benjamin Lester's Diary, 18th February, 1769; Thomas Hyde to John Calcraft, 18th February, 1769, op. cit.
91. S.J., 20th February, 1769.
92. John Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III, (Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 6-8, 15-22, 164, 205-16.

93. Ibid, pp. 15, 174; George Rude, Wilkes and Liberty, a Social Study of 1763 to 1774, (Oxford, 1962), Chapter X, passim.
94. Walter James Shenton, English Hunger and Industrial Disorders: a Study of Social Conflict during the First Decade of George III's Reign, (1973), pp. 7-8.
95. Dame Lucy Sutherland, The City of London and the Opposition to Government 1768-1774: a Study in the Rise of Metropolitan Radicalism, (Creighton Lecture, London, 1959), pp. 12-16, 23-4, 31-2.
96. Sir John Fortescue, ed., The Correspondence of King George III from 1760 to 1783, (6 vols., 1927-8), Vol.I, pp. 71-2, 78; T.W. Copeland et al., eds., The Correspondence of Edmund Burke, (9 vols., Cambridge, 1958-70), Vol.II, p. 115; S.J., 6th February, 1769.
97. This analysis is based on the lists of electors prepared for John Calcraft in 1768-9 (D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 2), and the list of Mauger's supporters in the Salisbury Journal, 20th February, 1769.  
Electors open to money bribes: Edward and James Allen, Robert Mills Jun., Thomas Tite, Adam and Joseph Wadham, James, John and William Wise.  
Discontented placemen: Richard Kirby (Lieutenant of a man-of-war on half-pay), Thomas Strong, Richard Weston Jun. (Captain of Marines on half-pay), John Hooper who wanted to become Mayor, William Budden who wanted to become Sheriff.  
Mauger's relatives: John Scaplen (nephew) and Farr Strong (cousin).  
Mauger's business associates: Thomas Nickleson and George Olive.  
Members of the Jolliffe family: Peter Jolliffe, Mayor, Peter Jolliffe Jun., Christopher Jolliffe, Christopher Jolliffe Jun.  
 (As the leading Poole merchants in the Carolina trade the Jolliffes were opposed to the American policy of the government).  
Electors influenced by Isaac Lester: John Bird, Thomas Bird Jun., Richard Gleed, Benjamin Lester, John Lester.  
 Isaac Lester (1718-1778), a supporter of John Masters, had afterwards obtained government contracts as a King's Cooper. In 1760 he lost this position because of his exorbitant charges and in 1768 was regarded by the Poole Customs Officers as a particularly troublesome individual. (E.F.J. Mathews, 'An Economic History of Poole 1756-1815', unpublished London University Ph.D thesis, 1958, pp. 305-6). His support for Mauger thus came from his thwarted ambition but he was closely involved in the Newfoundland trade with his brother Benjamin and opposed any development in Newfoundland threatening their interest there. (Derek Beamish, John Hillier and H.F.V. Johnstone, Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset, Vol.I, pp. 87-94).

98. Chapter Four, pp. 84-6.
99. Shenton, op. cit., pp. 21-46, 155-163. Scrutiny of the records of the Petty and Quarter Sessions in Poole reveals no evidence of riots or unusual variations in crime or social distress in these years. Grain movements caused some of the riots in England in 1766. (Shenton, op. cit., pp. 26-8, 34-6, 39-44) and wheat was exported from Poole in 1766. (Quarter Sessions Presentments of prices: October, 1765, January, April, July, 1766). The late Dr. E.F.J. Mathews pointed out that there were suspicions of jobbery in the presentments made of prices in 1776, when prices were falsified so that such exports could take place. (E.F.J. Mathews, op. cit., pp. 37-8). It may be suggested that the absence of rioting in Poole was a result of the relatively stricter control over society exerted by the merchant élite, and the prosperity of the Newfoundland trade.
100. E.F.J. Mathews, op. cit., p. 25.
101. Sutherland, op. cit., pp. 6-7, 17-21; Rude, op. cit., p. 180.
102. Sutherland, op. cit., p. 5.
103. Brewer, op. cit., p. 8, Chapter 9, passim.
104. John Brooke, The Chatham Administration 1766-1768, (1956), pp. xi-xii, 68.
105. J.M. Sosin, Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution, (Nebraska University Press, 1965), p. 119.
106. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 429-442; D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 3, Benjamin Lester's Diary, 1st November, 1769.
107. Brewer, op. cit., pp. 1-16.
108. Clark, op. cit., pp. 512 and notes 2 and 3, 513-4 and note 3, 526-7.
109. Brooke, op. cit., p. 292.
110. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, pp. 119-20. See also: Bernard Donaghue, British Politics and the American Revolution: the Path to War 1773-1775, (1964), Appendix 1, p. 292.
111. Ian R. Christie, Myth and Reality in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics, (1970), pp. 298-300.
112. Ibid, p. 301.
113. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 99-100.
114. Ibid, pp. 115-6, 223-5.
115. Brooke, The Chatham Administration 1766-1768, op. cit., pp. 339-41, 351-3.

116. Brewer, op. cit., pp. 11-12 and Chapter 6, passim.; Namier, England in the Age of the American Revolution, op. cit., p. 159.
117. Namier, The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III, op. cit., pp. 78-9.
118. For example, "William Lander - has a son clerk to ye Collector who is the proper person to apply to him". Mauger accused Calcraft of threatening placemen with dismissal if they voted for Mauger. Lists of electors, op. cit.; Mauger Election Petition 1768, D.C.R.O., D. 86, F. 3.
119. Davies, op. cit., pp. 141-2; John Derry, English Politics and the American Revolution, (1976), pp. 51 et seq.

CHAPTER FOUR  
POLITICS AND ELECTIONS DURING AND AFTER THE AMERICAN CONFLICT:  
1774-1790

Developments in national politics had a greater influence on the course of politics in the town during this period, initially because of the impact of the American conflict and subsequently as a result of the struggles between Pitt and Fox. The Commonalty group of ratepayers were encouraged by the continuing Wilkite agitation of the early 1770s to claim the parliamentary franchise. They were further stimulated by the American War but were unable to achieve their aims. The effects of the conflict with the Americans on the Newfoundland trade contributed to the struggles between the interests in the Corporation. The ultimate failure of North's administration eventually caused its allies in Poole to lose control of the electors. Pitt's administration was however unable to continue its initial success in the constituency in 1784.

Personal and local considerations naturally still played an important part in politics and elections during these years. They helped to produce two major interests in the Corporation. One of these became committed to the support of North's administration. The other came to represent those electors who continued to show the more critical and independent attitude towards government which had emerged in the 1760s. Its conduct remained opportunist until it began to support the younger Pitt. After 1784 the re-alignment of the interests produced a clear division between the supporters of Pitt and those favouring the Whig opposition.

Government influence in the constituency remained of importance but failed to recover the ground it had lost in the 1760s. This was mainly because, over the period as a whole, an increasing number of the Corporation were willing to support opposition candidates. This hostility to administrations stemmed principally from the resentment of some of the Newfoundland merchants over the effects of government action on their trading interests.

The 1774 General Election

The result of the election held on 11th October, 1774 was the return of Colonel Sir Eyre Coote and Mauger with 59 and 55 votes respectively.<sup>(1)</sup> Charles James Fox and John Williams who had stood against them received 5 and 2 votes each from the members of the Corporation and the votes of 148 and 137 ratepayers respectively.<sup>(2)</sup> The votes of the ratepayers were

disallowed by the Sheriff and the subsequent petitions from Fox, Williams and the ratepayers against the return of Eyre Coote and Mauger were rejected by the Commons in March 1775.<sup>(3)</sup>

Preparations for this election had begun as early as May 1773 because Thomas Calcraft had almost certainly decided to retire from Parliament before John Calcraft's death in 1772.<sup>(4)</sup> The initiative came not from North's administration but from Isaac Lester, who had captured control of the mayoralty in 1772. Previously a supporter of Mauger, he had deserted him sometime between May 1770 and September 1772.<sup>(5)</sup> In May 1773 he approached Robinson with a view to nominating Admiral Shulldham, Governor of Newfoundland 1772-1774. He was uneasy at the strength of Mauger's interest in the Corporation and eventually declined the offer.<sup>(6)</sup>

In September 1774 Robinson nominated Eyre Coote and John Pitt of Encombe, Dorset, as the administration's candidates.<sup>(7)</sup> Initially they were opposed by Mauger and Fox, who had been introduced to the town by his great friend, James Hare, the brother-in-law of a Poole merchant.<sup>(8)</sup> Mauger and Fox had agreed to stand jointly, with the additional support of the ratepayer householders of the Commonalty who were now seeking to share the parliamentary franchise with the members of the Corporation.<sup>(9)</sup> A week before the election Coote deserted Pitt and joined with Mauger "to prevent that load of expense which otherwise threatened."<sup>(10)</sup> Pitt was forced to retire. Williams, a wealthy West Indian merchant, joined Fox in opposing Eyre Coote and Mauger.

Two aspects of the course of this election and its result are of particular significance: the state of the government influence over the Corporation and the emergence of the Commonalty agitation.

In making a deliberate choice of two candidates who, a hostile reporter alleged, "were furnished with treasury Mandates to the fullest extent",<sup>(11)</sup> Robinson and Eden had exerted themselves rather more than Grafton had done in 1768.<sup>(12)</sup> However, they were not well-served by Eyre Coote, "that rapacious and difficult soldier",<sup>(13)</sup> who showed no compunction in coming to terms with Mauger to secure a seat and save himself expenses such as those he had incurred at Leicester in 1768.<sup>(14)</sup> Like many of the East Indians, who were returned in increasing numbers from 1774, he was a ruthlessly self-centred individual,<sup>(15)</sup> and his conduct illustrates the particular problem government faced in maintaining its influence in elections when men of such wealth and independence entered politics.

It was not however merely Eyre Coote's arrangement with Mauger that forced the withdrawal of Pitt, the other ministerial candidate. Pitt was not wanted by one of the interests of the Corporation, which was otherwise willing to support the administration. Robinson had assumed that the interest built up in Poole by Calcraft was still intact and that it would support Pitt, whom John Calcraft had evidently endorsed as his successor in the constituency. The government was not in close enough touch with Poole to realise the changes which had occurred in the loyalties of the interests in the Corporation since the previous election.

In 1774 Mauger retained a strong interest amongst those willing to oppose the administration, despite the loss of Lester's support. The supporters of North's ministry were divided however between the interests headed by Thomas Hyde and Isaac Lester. Hyde,<sup>(16)</sup> who had been close to Calcraft, was willing to accept Pitt as a candidate but Lester rejected him.<sup>(17)</sup> The two interests were also separated by personal rivalries between Lester and Hyde.<sup>(18)</sup>

Lester had deserted Mauger and become a supporter of the administration for two main reasons. He wanted to increase the strength of his interest in the Corporation and evidently calculated that he could best achieve this by gaining access to government favour which Mauger as a member of the opposition could not be relied upon to obtain. The second reason for his change of attitude came from the fresh threats to the Newfoundland trade which had appeared since the previous election. One of these was the continuing success of the French fisheries, which Shuldham as Governor of Newfoundland was concerned to check.<sup>(19)</sup> The merchants were also faced by a depression in the Portuguese market, caused partly by Pombal's economic measures.<sup>(20)</sup> In addition, between 1770 and 1771 the preparations for war with Spain over the Falkland Islands meant that the Poole merchants had suffered heavily from naval impressment.<sup>(21)</sup> These new dangers to their interests made some of the merchants more determined to support Mauger, but Lester and those who followed him decided instead to seek reassurances from the administration. However, they had little confidence in Pitt's ability to represent their interests adequately. They wanted a candidate like Shuldham who was closely related to their trade instead of Pitt, a substantial landowner whose connection with government was his post as Surveyor General of Woods and Forests.

The effectiveness of the government influence in Poole in 1774 was thus limited not only by the continuing strength of Mauger's interest, and the assistance Eyre Coote gave to Mauger, but also by a degree of independence amongst some of the other voters who were disposed to support the administration. The division in the supporters of the ministry made it difficult for government to exercise its influence effectively. The course of this election in Poole illustrates very clearly the truth of Donoghue's comment on "the enormous variety of local struggles, compromises and agreements"<sup>(22)</sup> in the 1774 election. The complexity of the circumstances which shaped the result in Poole, and the absence of a poll book, makes it impossible to measure in detail the extent of government influence over the voters. Nevertheless, it is clear that the administration had not recovered the ground lost in the 1760s. Better management of its influence in 1774 would have resulted in a stronger challenge to Mauger and the opposition it faced, but it is very doubtful if this could have been defeated in 1774. Behind the new developments in the prospects of the Newfoundland trade, which became grievances for some of the merchants, there still lay the resentment over the strengthening of government in Newfoundland.

Inasmuch as there was any precise issue in the 1774 election it was the attempt by the ratepayers of the Commonalty to share in the parliamentary franchise. As in all but a few constituencies the American issue did not emerge in the course of this election.<sup>(23)</sup> Only in Bristol did the merchants show concern over the likely results of North's coercive policy towards the colonists. In other ports they accepted government actions out of exasperation with the Americans.<sup>(24)</sup> For the great majority of Poole merchants trade with the mainland colonies was subsidiary to the Newfoundland trade and they did not realise the potential threat to this from the mainland until the Revolution had properly started. Accustomed as they were to firmly controlling the inhabitants of Newfoundland in the course of their trade they had little fear of rebellion occurring there and little sympathy with the grievances of the mainland colonists.<sup>(25)</sup> Mauger too had every reason to be ultra-loyalist in his attitude to the American issue because his controlling interest in Nova Scotia depended on the connection between Britain and that colony,<sup>(26)</sup> but he continued his independent opposition to government.

There is every indication that the agitation by the Commonalty group in 1774 resembled the 'radicalism' which marked this election in boroughs such as Worcester, Great Yarmouth and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where local grievances affecting the corporations prompted similar protests.



Only to a very limited extent did these protests involve any real appreciation of the issues raised by Wilkes and the Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights and this true radicalism counted for little outside the metropolis.<sup>(27)</sup>

In 1774 the smaller and 'middling' men in the town, such as John Bundock, the corn-factor, and Robert Miller, the cooper, who supported the Commonalty, had a sense of injustice because of the lapse of time since the Corporation had admitted a new group of burgesses.<sup>(28)</sup> Society in Poole was beginning to outgrow the political framework provided for it but there is no evidence that the ratepayers' struggle in 1774 was motivated by any radical ideology, or that it was affected in anything but a general sense by the radicalism of the metropolis.

This is not surprising since only one convinced supporter of Wilkes has been traced in the town. This was the Rev. John Howell, the Unitarian minister, whose declining congregation in these years meant that his influence in Poole was limited.<sup>(29)</sup> Mauger, it is true supported Wilkes in the Commons,<sup>(30)</sup> but he was only a tenuous link between metropolitan radicalism and Poole as his desertion of the Commonalty in 1774 emphasised. Fox was no supporter of Wilkite radicalism at this time. His views were still in a formative stage for he had recently shown hostility to Wilkes and the use he made of extra-parliamentary opinion, and there were still prospects that he would rejoin the administration.<sup>(31)</sup> This uncertainty showed in his attitude to the Commonalty in Poole. When adopted by them as a candidate, "he politely thanked them, and wished for the assistance of all of his friends without intermeddling with their rights."<sup>(32)</sup> His pressing concern in 1774 was to find a seat<sup>(33)</sup> and he sought to enjoy the best of both worlds - to court the votes of both the burgesses and the ratepayers. The burgess responsible for introducing Fox to Poole, Peter Jolliffe, was no convinced radical either, for his patronage of the Commonalty appears to have come from his business misfortunes which were made worse by the American crisis.<sup>(34)</sup> In enlisting Fox and taking up the cause of the ratepayers he was attempting to rebuild his influence in the community rather than dedicating himself to the radical cause.

The Commonalty thus lacked adequate and dedicated radical leadership but Mauger, Fox and Jolliffe had nonetheless played a part in encouraging the ratepayers to pursue their grievance over the franchise. Mauger's interest in the Corporation and patronage of the Commonalty meant that they could have some real hope of persuading the burgesses to meet their wishes. Fox was already a celebrity whose intervention in the election was bound to have flattered and encouraged the ratepayers,

despite his ambivalent attitude.<sup>(35)</sup> Jolliffe's support of their cause again emphasised the prospect that the Corporation might be brought to widen its membership.

There were therefore strong local reasons for the intervention of the ratepayers in the 1774 election and in the absence of evidence of ideological commitment to radicalism their agitation cannot be regarded as more than an example of radicalism in embryo. They are better seen in 1774 as a new group of independents, stimulated by the Wilkite agitation and for a time encouraged by the independent and opposition elements in the Corporation. In 1775, however, the Commonalty began to see their local grievance over the franchise from a wider perspective and took up a more definite radical and ideological stance.

#### The Effect of the American War of Independence and its Aftermath 1775-1784

In many ways the American war complicated the pattern of national politics. During North's administration neither the government or its opponents were always clear as to what war aims should be pursued.<sup>(36)</sup> The sudden changes in the fortunes of war brought swift changes in the standing of the administration.<sup>(37)</sup> Patriotic feelings and the fear of being accused of treasonable views sometimes blunted criticism of government.<sup>(38)</sup> Well before North's fall his ministry became unstable<sup>(39)</sup> and this political instability continued until Pitt's decisive victory in 1784 re-established stability and a more clear distinction between the administration and opposition.<sup>(40)</sup>

In the political life of Poole during this period the continuing personal rivalries between leading merchants added a further complication to the uncertainties of wartime and post-war politics. The American War had a significant effect on the political attitude of the Corporation however. The pressure of war on the port's extensive trading interests brought about a greater measure of support for the administration as the merchants were forced to rely more heavily on its protection for their trade. But this was by no means a steady or complete process and left a large measure of independence in the Corporation's attitude to government. The result of the 1780 election was again therefore only a partial victory for the administration and although in 1784 the Poole electors, like those in many other constituencies, turned against the Fox-North coalition, the outcome was only a temporary victory for Pitt's administration. The Commonalty agitation, encouraged by the American War, continued. It failed to secure its aims but had some effect on the two principal interests in the Corporation.

Four groups can be identified in the Corporation during the period 1775-1780. A very small number of the burgesses sympathised with the Commonalty. Mauger's interest dwindled rapidly. As Namier suggested,<sup>(41)</sup> he almost certainly lost support because the dangers of the American War made his freebooting independence unattractive to most members of the Corporation. It is likely too that his decision to begin to disengage himself from the affairs of Nova Scotia also made him a less imposing and attractive figure in Poole.<sup>(42)</sup> The majority of the burgesses were thus divided between the interests headed by the Lester family and Thomas Hyde.

The Lester interest was reinforced by the final return from Newfoundland of Isaac Lester's brother, Benjamin.<sup>(43)</sup> It became closely identified with North's ministry, especially Lord Sandwich,<sup>(44)</sup> and before Eyre Coote's departure for India in 1778 the Lesters attempted to monopolise his attention in the constituency.<sup>(45)</sup> The remaining interest was headed by Thomas Hyde. The personal rivalry between Hyde and the Lesters continued to be one of the reasons for the existence of this group, but Hyde and his followers were ready to exploit the adverse effects of the war on the town's interests and to use Mauger and the Commonalty in order to weaken the power of the Lester interest.<sup>(46)</sup> They also became more critical of the trend of government policy in Newfoundland and in particular opposed the restrictions the North ministry attempted to impose on the merchants there by Palliser's Act of 1775.<sup>(47)</sup> In effect, the Hyde interest thus took a more independent attitude and were almost certainly able to recruit some of Mauger's former supporters as his interest decayed. It was not however an interest committed to outright opposition to the administration.

The growing conflict with the American colonists had a direct result on the political life of Poole from 1775 onwards. Although the issue had not featured in the election of 1774 the supporters of the Commonalty took it up in 1775 when the dispute over the parliamentary franchise was decided in favour of the Corporation by the Commons. They accused the Corporation of making a bargain with North's administration whereby the Corporation were given support for their claim to the exclusive franchise in return for agreeing to the second instalment of North's coercive measures against the colonists, including their exclusion from the Newfoundland fisheries.<sup>(48)</sup> The Corporation's "diabolical" petition in favour of this legislation was described as support for "butchering and starving their American brethren".<sup>(49)</sup> Later this year, when hostilities broke out in America, the Commonalty took an even stronger

view. Isaac Lester described to Eyre Coote in October how the Commonalty had met "in a kind of mock Congress and made many resolves: one was to address and petition the King ... I am told it is couched in very indecent language, I suppose not unlike Milner's public declaration, which is that he wishes the King's forces throat (sic) may be cut that are gone to America, and the heads of those that sent them were set on Temple Bar".<sup>(50)</sup>

The basis of the argument used by the Commonalty in their attack on the Corporation's dealings with the government, that the King and North were behaving tyrannically towards the colonists and that they were endangering liberty in Britain, since liberty was indivisible, was a common feature in the reaction of radicals in this country to the American conflict.<sup>(51)</sup> The ratepaying householders of the Commonalty would also have been attracted by the elaboration of the argument over taxation and representation to justify parliamentary reform made by James Burgh in 1774-5.<sup>(52)</sup>

The use of such arguments by the Commonalty in Poole in 1775, rather than during the previous election, came about partly because it was not until late in 1774 that the Real Whig, or Commonwealthmen, had formulated their ideas on the American question. With the decline of the Wilkite movement after 1774, radical publicists such as Major John Cartwright who drew on the Commonwealth tradition gained more influence.<sup>(53)</sup> The frustration felt by the Commonalty after their defeat by the Corporation and the sharpening of the conflict with the colonists in 1775 also contributed to their desire to find a wider basis for their claim against the Corporation.

It has been possible to identify only two of the supporters of the Commonalty who opposed the American War. These were Peter Jolliffe, one of the Corporation, and George Milner. Jolliffe's business affairs went from bad to worse in 1775 as a result of South Carolina's decision to embargo trade with Britain, and he had every reason to oppose the war. He was regarded as a mouthpiece for the view of Fox,<sup>(54)</sup> then emerging as a friend to the colonists.<sup>(55)</sup> Milner was a Unitarian.<sup>(56)</sup> Since Dissenters continued to play a major role in the radical movement, and in the opposition to the war,<sup>(57)</sup> it is likely that others of the numerous Dissenters in the town were both supporters of the Commonalty and opponents of the war. But support for the Commonalty and opposition to the war were not synonymous. Another Unitarian, George Ollive, opposed the war and the claims of the Commonalty.<sup>(58)</sup> It is also probable that some of the Commonalty voters shrank from adopting the more extreme radical view on the war, especially since their comparatively humble position in society made them vulnerable to informers and prosecution for sedition.<sup>(59)</sup>

On balance however the American War benefited the Commonalty. When general dissatisfaction with the war made it possible for the Association movement to rise in 1779,<sup>(60)</sup> Milner took part in the Dorset Committee, which petitioned for economical and parliamentary reform and reconciliation with the Americans in 1780.<sup>(61)</sup> The Commonalty came forward again in the 1780 election. Although only very few of the members of the Corporation showed any real sympathy for their cause between 1775 and 1780, the divisions in the Corporation, which the war helped to exacerbate, and the manner in which some of the burgesses made use of the Commonalty for their own purposes in these quarrels also gave them encouragement to persist in their struggle.

Initially the Corporation was able to achieve virtual unanimity in its attitude to the American conflict. A petition was sent up in support of the New England Trade and Fisheries Bill in February 1775,<sup>(62)</sup> and in March, Benjamin Lester gave evidence before Parliament in favour of the exclusion of the Americans from the Newfoundland fisheries.<sup>(63)</sup> There was probably some truth in the Commonalty's accusation that the Corporation supported the government's policy towards the Americans in order to secure its exclusive right to the parliamentary franchise. Since Grenville's Act of 1770<sup>(64)</sup> election petitions were heard by select committees of the Commons but it is likely that the Corporation felt it necessary to curry favour with the administration. They were alarmed at the decision of the King's Bench on a case involving the rights of members of the Portsmouth Corporation in 1774.<sup>(65)</sup>

The Corporation was not able to maintain this united support of the administration. Almost as soon as the petition in favour of the legislation had been agreed some burgesses changed their mind about the wisdom of excluding the Americans from Newfoundland because they feared that the loss of supplies of foodstuffs from the American mainland would seriously interfere with the conduct of the fisheries.<sup>(66)</sup> Their fears were realised and it was not until 1777 that the merchants were able to secure adequate supplies for their dependents in Newfoundland.<sup>(67)</sup> In the meantime, a petition for permission to export provisions from Britain to the fisheries there caused further dissension amongst the merchants.<sup>(68)</sup> Personal rivalries, especially between the Lesters and Hyde, inflamed these disagreements but they also stemmed from differences between their respective needs as merchants for supplies from the mainland colonies.<sup>(69)</sup>

By September 1775 the disagreements in the Corporation encouraged a minority of the Corporation, made up of the few sympathizers with the Commonalty, to oppose a loyal address to the King which condemned the rebellious Americans. They used terms similar to those previously employed by the Commonalty, referring to "this unnatural contest with America", in which "there was not a soldier or sailor but was forced there with reluctance".<sup>(70)</sup> Hyde and his interest secretly encouraged the opposition to the Address although they signed it.<sup>(71)</sup> At this time and afterwards, Hyde's interest stopped short of expressing outright opposition to the war because of the dangers it brought to the trading interests of the port and their fear of being condemned as unpatriotic. The unhappy record of the parliamentary opposition to North's ministry in any case gave them no incentive to adopt a firm stance in opposition. Despite the success of the Rockingham Whigs in fostering the growth of their party, their ambiguous attitude to the American conflict and disagreements with Chatham and Shelburne helped to prevent them from achieving effective opposition to North.<sup>(72)</sup> Hyde and his followers preferred to take an independent course in politics rather than accept the loyalty to party developing amongst the Rockingham Whigs.

As the war began to affect the town's commercial interests, with losses to American privateers off Newfoundland starting in 1776 and the impressment of seamen into the Navy,<sup>(73)</sup> the Corporation's disagreements continued. Since the Lesters were loyally striving to keep the Corporation in support of the government, Hyde and his associates were able to exploit the difficulties brought by the war against them.<sup>(74)</sup> This was a ploy made easier for Hyde because of the Lesters' association with Sandwich, who was rightly identified as one of the most aggressive ministers towards the colonists at the beginning of the struggle, and was later unjustly condemned for his conduct of the naval war.<sup>(75)</sup>

Eyre Coote was of little help to the Lesters. He was willing to offer little but platitudes when told of the divisions in the Corporation,<sup>(76)</sup> and when he eventually admitted his intention to leave for India in 1778, introduced William Morton Pitt, the son of John Pitt, as the eventual successor to his seat.<sup>(77)</sup> The Lesters were thus faced with a prospective candidate whose father they had opposed in 1774. In the short term they attempted to avoid using Mauger as an intermediary with the administration by arranging for Gulston, the former member, to "nurse" the constituency. Gulston however did not respond very energetically to this opportunity.<sup>(78)</sup>

Despite their difficulties the Lesters continued to control the mayoralty except in 1778 when their loss of it was almost certainly caused by the death of Isaac Lester shortly before the mayoral election.<sup>(79)</sup> Benjamin Lester's success in becoming mayor in 1779, when North's government appeared to be failing in every theatre of the war and threatening the very security of the country,<sup>(80)</sup> is at first sight surprising. While allowances must be made for the bribing of Lester's supporters, the explanation of renewed support for the local representatives of the administration at this time must be the patriotic rally which occurred when the country faced such real and immediate threats to its security. The entry of Spain into the war meant that Britain was threatened by invasion during the summer. Professor Temple Patterson's study of this menace demonstrates that the patriotic reaction to it was more complex and uneven<sup>(81)</sup> than Professor Butterfield assumed,<sup>(82)</sup> but nevertheless real. The Poole merchants, situated as they were so close to the intended point of invasion, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight,<sup>(83)</sup> were very much alive to this threat.<sup>(84)</sup> Lester was able to profit from their increased patriotic zeal to repair his interest after the reverse it had suffered in the previous year.

For most of the time between 1775 and 1780 a majority of the Corporation was thus in support of North's government. Only a few of its members opposed the war outright. While Hyde's interest sniped at the Lesters and their support for government it was not a formed opposition to the administration. The Poole merchants grumbled at the difficulties the war brought them. Palliser's Act of 1775 was resented. However, the majority of them realised their particular dependence on government to protect their trade during the war. Moreover, the overall effect of the war was to enhance existing trends in the nature of the fisheries - to strengthen the position of the larger merchants and increase the holding of property in Newfoundland so that it began to resemble more nearly a settled colony.<sup>(85)</sup> As this process developed, the merchants were thus likely to rely more heavily on government to protect their increased stake in Newfoundland in times of great crisis. Outside such periods of great stress however the trade remained ready to criticise government action and provided support for Hyde's interest and what was left of Mauger's interest. The success of the Lesters in retaining control of the Corporation in these years did not mean that the tendency towards independence amongst some of the burgesses had ceased to exist.

## The 1780 General Election

The poll held on 9th September 1780 resulted in the return of William Morton Pitt and Joseph Gulston, standing as the government candidates, with 87 and 80 votes respectively.<sup>(86)</sup> They were opposed by Mauger and John Adams,<sup>(87)</sup> who stood as Commonalty candidates and received 11 and 6 votes respectively from the Corporation and 150 votes from the ratepayer householders.<sup>(88)</sup> The votes of the latter were disallowed by the Sheriff. The petition of Mauger and Adams against this return was supported by a petition from the Commonalty. Both petitions were rejected by the Commons in February 1782.<sup>(89)</sup>

Lester had put forward Gulston, his godson, evidently hoping that his ways could be improved. Hyde and his interest had accepted Pitt. Robinson's view of the prospects in Poole in July 1780 recognised the likelihood of a contest but he was hesitant over which candidates would appear. Eyre Coote was likely to withdraw. He evidently considered the possibility of Lord Salisbury's son, Lord Cranborne, standing for government but doubted his willingness to come forward. "Mauger has but little chance as an individual and may probably also decline". He concluded that the likely result would be the return of Gulston, "who is a warm friend", and Pitt, "who has made professions of friendship to Lord North".<sup>(90)</sup> In August, he chose Gulston and Pitt as the administration candidates.<sup>(91)</sup>

The appearance of Mauger as a Commonalty candidate at this election after his desertion of their cause in 1774 was a clear indication of the decline of his interest in the Corporation. Apart from his weakness as an opposition candidate when wartime conditions prompted the majority of the electors to take a less independent attitude towards government, and his withdrawal from Nova Scotia, he lost ground to Pitt. Those electors who were most inclined to take a more critical and independent view were satisfied with Pitt because his behaviour soon made it clear that Robinson had miscalculated in amending his parliamentary state to count on Pitt as a likely supporter of North.<sup>(92)</sup> In the month of his election Pitt wrote to his friend of his desire "not to come with a pre-determined intention of siding uniformly with one or other set" and "to act an upright, independent and respectable part in Parliament".<sup>(93)</sup> He became a consistent opponent of North's government.<sup>(94)</sup>

The Commonalty candidates won a few more votes from members of the Corporation but these came very probably from the remnants of Mauger's interest and did not represent any significant change in the attitude of the burgesses to the claims of the householders. There was an increase in the number of Commonalty voters from outside the Corporation, an indication that the Association movement had encouraged their hopes of success.



As before however, the administration had to be content with the return of one supporter from Poole. Government influence in the constituency thus remained at approximately the same effective strength it had held since the 1768-9 elections. Nationally this election was a failure for the administration, which had gambled on an early dissolution of Parliament in the hopes of exploiting the favourable change in public opinion after the Gordon Riots and the capture of Charleston. These hopes came to nothing in those constituencies where public opinion could make itself heard.<sup>(95)</sup> Poole was not a 'popular' constituency, as the struggle of the Commonalty showed, but it was a relatively open borough in which the Corporation were sufficiently well-informed and concerned for the port's interests to take a partly critical view of government. Robinson's miscalculation of Pitt's true feelings complicates the task of comparing the result in Poole with the result of the election in general, but it was unlikely that government would have gained the second seat if a more pronounced supporter of North had stood there. The readiness of some of the electors to take an independent attitude, which had resulted in Mauger's election in 1768-9 and 1774, and support for Hyde's interest since then, had not been fundamentally altered during the war years. Robinson had failed to appreciate the true state of public opinion in the nation in 1780.<sup>(96)</sup> He did not appreciate the degree of independence existing amongst the electors of Poole. The Poole result was thus comparable to an extent with the national result.

#### The 1784 General Election

Three candidates contested the poll on 1st April 1784. Gulston standing for the opposition to Pitt's new ministry, was defeated with 35 votes.<sup>(97)</sup> W.M. Pitt, who had become a supporter of Pitt after he had gained office under Shelburne, headed the poll with 57 votes. Michael Angelo Taylor,<sup>(98)</sup> introduced to the Borough by Hyde's interest,<sup>(99)</sup> and recommended by William Pitt and Lord Howe,<sup>(100)</sup> was also elected with 43 votes. The Commonalty, as a body, took no part in the poll.

As in previous elections, purely personal and local considerations continued to be important influences in the constituency. Well before North went out of office, Gulston's indolence, which had contributed to him losing his seat in 1768-9, was making it difficult for Lester to maintain support for him and North's ministry. Gulston neglected requests for patronage Lester needed for his interest.<sup>(101)</sup> His increasing financial problems became known in the town<sup>(102)</sup> and by 1782 his health was beginning to break down.<sup>(103)</sup> It was thus with comparative ease that

Lester's opponents "poisoned the minds of the voters with some little circumstances of our friend Gulston's private affairs that the Whites and some others left us".<sup>(104)</sup> Hyde's opposition to Lester's long-lived influence over the Corporation was also still to an extent a matter of personal rivalry.

However, the result of this election also reflected very clearly the effects of the dramatic changes which had occurred in national politics since the Surrender at Yorktown late in 1781.<sup>(105)</sup> Lester's loyalty to North and his ability to retain control of the mayoralty between 1781 and 1783 is a local illustration of the powerful following North kept after his fall,<sup>(106)</sup> even if allowance is made for Lester's selfish desire to preserve his own power over the Corporation. But it is clear that North's fall in 1782 made it difficult for him to keep control of the Corporation. Despite his initial success in warding off the attempts by Hyde's interest to make capital out of North's departure, he evidently had to spend very heavily to win the mayoralty in 1782.<sup>(107)</sup> Understandably he found it hard to keep pace with the change of ministries after 1782. Long after the end of North's ministry he was writing to Robinson with information,<sup>(108)</sup> unaware that Robinson was gradually withdrawing from his allegiance to North.<sup>(109)</sup> Although pleased by North's return to power in the coalition, Lester was clearly sometimes uneasy about his collaboration with Fox.<sup>(110)</sup> Distracted by the dismissal of the coalition<sup>(111)</sup> he appears to have totally miscalculated the chances of an election in 1784 and the likelihood of opposition to Gulston as a coalition candidate. He thus discounted Gulston's fears that a third candidate would be found to make a contest,<sup>(112)</sup> only to find that Hyde, having agreed to support the sitting members, brought in Taylor shortly before the election.<sup>(113)</sup>

In contrast, Hyde and the supporters of W.M. Pitt profited from the changes in national politics. They continued to follow an independent course until Shelburne formed his ministry with the younger Pitt, and were still ready to encourage the Commonalty agitation on occasions to embarrass Lester,<sup>(114)</sup> although only one or two of them had any sincere wish to see parliamentary or economical reform from either Rockingham or Shelburne. As independents they welcomed Shelburne as an exponent of non-party government in opposition to the views of the Rockinghamites.<sup>(115)</sup> In more specific terms, once Shelburne formed his government they gained direct access to government patronage through W.M. Pitt.<sup>(116)</sup>

They profited too from Shelburne's diplomatic skill in negotiating the Peace of Versailles.<sup>(117)</sup> This was a much better settlement for the Newfoundland merchants than they had originally expected. They had feared that the British government would be forced to make quite unacceptable concessions to the French and American demands for fishing rights in Newfoundland. The revision of the French rights, the return to France of St. Pierre and Miquelon and the gains made by the Americans were disliked but acceptable in view of their earlier fears about the peace treaty.<sup>(118)</sup> The comparatively favourable peace terms compensated for Hyde's failure to secure the repeal of the objectionable features of Palliser's Act or persuade the government to moderate its policy on the customs in Newfoundland.<sup>(119)</sup>

By 1784 Hyde and his supporters thus had good prospects of overthrowing Gulston and Lester. Their appetite for freer access to government patronage had been whetted by their brief enjoyment of this in Shelburne's ministry and they could look forward to handsome rewards through the good offices of W.M. Pitt, a distant cousin of the nation's new hero. For the time being there were no clear major issues affecting the town's major interest - the Newfoundland trade, the interest which had prompted Hyde and his followers to adopt a critical attitude to government. The issue of freedom for American trade which aroused hostility amongst the merchants had been shelved.<sup>(120)</sup> The marked prosperity of the British fisheries in the post-war period meant that resentment over French and American participation in the fisheries and Palliser's Act was dulled.<sup>(121)</sup> Because the merchants' agitation against this Act had won no response from any of the different ministries since its passage in 1775 there was no reason for them to feel that Pitt's government would be less accommodating. Instead, it is likely that they expected more understanding from the younger Pitt in view of his father's concern for trade and his own association with the unexpectedly acceptable terms of the 1783 settlement.

The supporters of radical politics in Poole as elsewhere were disillusioned and divided by the formation of the Fox-North coalition.<sup>(122)</sup> After adopting a petition for parliamentary reform in January 1783 the Commonalty as a body took no further public action.<sup>(123)</sup> Its leading supporter in the Corporation, Jolliffe, a Foxite, collaborated with Lester in the 1784 election.<sup>(124)</sup> The remaining few burgesses who sympathised with the aim of the Commonalty apparently sided with Pitt and Taylor. The householders of the town joined Hyde's interest in signing a Pittite address.<sup>(125)</sup> They had no votes but their action was an expres-

sion of public opinion, of disgust with Fox's political behaviour and debauchery and of acclaim for Pitt's "purity and integrity".<sup>(126)</sup> Radical support for Pitt has been seen as an important element in his success in 1784.<sup>(127)</sup> In Poole the supporters of reform were able to play only a minor role because of their small numbers amongst the voters. The absence of Commonalty candidates from the election did however help Pitt's supporters since Commonalty candidates could have drawn a few votes away from the principal candidates.

Historical controversy over the 1784 election has concentrated on the respective parts played by government influence and public opinion in shaping its result. The controversy continues. Professor Cannon, while admitting that public opinion was of importance, gives first place to the influence of the administration.<sup>(128)</sup> Dr. Ehrman takes the view that "the King and Pitt were borne along on a wave of public approval."<sup>(129)</sup> Dr. Kelly has carried the argument further by defining what he regards as the two most important elements in public opinion: support for George III because of his popularity and radical support for Pitt. He argues that the King and Pitt succeeded in 1784 by accident rather than design.<sup>(130)</sup>

Government intelligence about the affairs of the Poole constituency was certainly as defective as it had been in previous elections. Robinson began by hoping that both Gulston and Pitt would be returned as Pittites with Lester's aid.<sup>(131)</sup> His assumption that Gulston would desert the Coalition was quite wrong. Gulston was seeking office to meet his financial problems but was in fact veering towards Fox.<sup>(132)</sup> The government was also dilatory in its election preparations. There is no evidence from the Lester manuscripts that Robinson approached him or Hyde's interest as Robinson's notes indicate that he intended to do.<sup>(133)</sup> Instead, the initiative was taken by two members of Hyde's interest who enlisted Taylor as a candidate.

Government influence was an important consideration in the election however. Hyde and his supporters were attracted by the prospect of a greater share of government patronage. While the absence of a poll book makes it impossible to measure how actively or successfully the ministry exploited its influence, there are indications that it made good use of this in Poole as in other constituencies.<sup>(134)</sup>

It was in the open boroughs that public opinion could make itself felt most effectively and Pitt won some of his most striking victories in these boroughs in 1784.<sup>(135)</sup> Poole, with an electorate of approximately 120 burgesses<sup>(136)</sup> from a population of between 3 and 4,000 people, was not an open borough like, for example, Hull, with its 1,200 electors.<sup>(137)</sup>

However, Dr. Ehrman argues that the distinction between 'open' and 'close' seats must not be pressed too far. "It was a matter of degree, and at neither end of the scale did opinion necessarily have free play. The openness of an open constituency consisted in an opportunity for manoeuvre by major interests, formed along the usual lines and wielding the usual pressures and inducements".<sup>(138)</sup> If this qualified definition of 'openness' is accepted, it is possible to argue that Poole was a partially open constituency in the sense that the Corporation included a sizeable group of members who had taken an independent and critical attitude towards the administration since the 1760s. This provided freedom of manoeuvre for the interests in the Corporation and in 1784 Hyde's interest exploited this freedom to bring about a contested election and defeat Gulston. Acceptance of Dr. Ehrman's definition of an open constituency thus ultimately implies that public opinion counted for something in relatively open boroughs such as Poole where a major interest had the freedom to express and make use of the Coalition's unpopularity and the public regard for the younger Pitt to defeat a supporter of the Coalition.

In the final analysis however this argument is not acceptable as a justification for regarding public opinion in Poole as a more important influence than that of government in the 1784 election. Hyde and his supporters may have been marginally encouraged by local expressions of regard for George III and Pitt but their prime motive in supporting the Pittite candidates was far more prosaic. They wanted to ensure direct and full access to government favours and consolidate their power in the Corporation. Now that Lester had lost the aid of government this election was a clear opportunity for Hyde and his interest to complete the overthrow of Lester's influence with which they had struggled for so long. W.M. Pitt's return as a supporter of his illustrious relative and the election of Taylor would mean that they would enjoy a monopoly of government patronage. In opposing Lester's influence they had always behaved as opportunists, never emerging as a formed opposition to it on grounds of principle. In 1784 they were still opportunists. They made sure that Gulston was defeated not because he was a supporter of the Coalition but because he represented Lester's influence, was personally ineffective as a representative and stood in the way of them achieving the fullest possible access to government favours. The manoeuvres of Lester's opponents in 1784 did not reflect any intrinsic sympathy with public opinion but were directed to make use of it to secure their own interests. Government influence was more important than public opinion in explaining the result of the 1784 election in Poole.

It does not follow however that the influence of the administration in Poole, which had been significantly reduced since the 1760s, had now fully recovered. This influence still lacked fully adequate direction. It was on the initiative of a local interest that Taylor had been brought to Poole in 1784. Had preparations for the election been left entirely to government, a contest would probably not have taken place. Moreover, the administration had only a temporary success in 1784. Afterwards many members of the Corporation returned to criticism of and hostility towards Pitt's ministry.

#### 1784-1790

During the four years after the 1784 election the political interests in the Corporation were reshaped with the result that a two party alignment emerged amongst the voters. Fox's success in retaining the loyalty of the majority of the members who had supported the Coalition, and the "extraordinarily impressive development of embryonic party institutions"<sup>(139)</sup> by William Adam thus had an influence on politics in the town.

Michael Angelo Taylor was one of a number of younger politicians who came to support Fox. After 1786 he became a firm supporter of his opposition to Pitt's administration, despite his earlier determination "to support Pitt on all great national points from the confidence he had in his integrity, and the high estimation in which he held his abilities."<sup>(140)</sup> Pitt's pettiness over the Westminster election and possibly disappointment over his failure to obtain a place appear to have first prompted Taylor to side with Fox, but once he became involved in the impeachment of Warren Hastings, he gave Fox whole-hearted support.<sup>(141)</sup>

He was able to build up an interest in Poole very quickly. Elected Recorder in June 1784,<sup>(142)</sup> he profited initially from W.M. Pitt's continued absence abroad by busying himself with the needs of the town.<sup>(143)</sup> He maintained this interest after he went into opposition. His supporters appear to have been drawn in the main from those more independently inclined voters who had supported Hyde's interest against Lester. One of their leaders was John Jeffery,<sup>(144)</sup> a Quaker who brought with him the votes of the small but influential Quaker group in the Corporation. Taylor's interest came to number approximately half of the Corporation and in 1786-7 it was able to capture the mayoralty.<sup>(145)</sup>

W.M. Pitt continued to enjoy the support of those electors remaining with Hyde and this interest was eventually reinforced by Benjamin Lester and his followers. After 1784 Lester gradually made his peace with W.M. Pitt and Hyde. Gulston's death in 1786 ended any hopes Lester had to secure his return in place of Taylor<sup>(146)</sup> and in 1788 by agreement with Hyde, George Garland, Lester's son-in-law, became Mayor.<sup>(147)</sup>

Clearly the division in national politics between Pittites and Foxites after 1784<sup>(148)</sup> was partly responsible for the emergence of the two opposed interests in the Corporation. The Whigs provided an alternative for voters who became disillusioned with Pitt's ministry. His administration offended some of the Newfoundland merchants because it resumed the reform of law and administration in the island.<sup>(149)</sup> By 1788 they were also dissatisfied by the government's treatment of their needs for supplies from the Americans.<sup>(150)</sup> The marked depression in the Newfoundland trade beginning in 1788<sup>(151)</sup> sharpened their discontent and in the controversy in Poole over the Regency Crisis attacks were made on the ministry for its alleged neglect of the Newfoundland trade.<sup>(152)</sup>

Taylor's interest profited also from the disappointment felt by the Dissenters at their failure to achieve the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.<sup>(153)</sup> The efforts made by Fox and some of the Whigs on their behalf enabled Taylor to attract a large body of support from the Dissenters amongst the voters in the 1790 election.

The activity of the Whigs in opposition to Pitt had an effect too on the attitude of Lester and his remaining supporters. The clear division between the Pittites and the Foxites emphasized how isolated his position in politics was after his defeat in 1784. His political conservatism and concern for sound government meant that he could not throw in his lot with the Foxites who were gaining a reputation for factious opposition by their conduct over parliamentary reform and the impeachment of Warren Hastings.<sup>(154)</sup> Because of his long experience and great success in the Newfoundland trade he could afford to take a wider view of its difficulties and a more favourable view of Pitt's ministry than other merchants. The existence of the Whig opposition thus helped to persuade Lester to join Pitt's supporters.

However, personal aspirations and rivalries also played a part in the realignment of the interests in the Corporation after 1784. Jeffery was an ambitious individual who was unlikely to have accepted Hyde's leadership for long. Lester was used to having power, and as the leading merchant in the town, was understandably unwilling to stay out of the centre of politics for long.

#### The General Election of 1790

The election was contested by two Pittite candidates, Benjamin Lester and the Hon. Charles Stuart,<sup>(155)</sup> two Whig candidates, Taylor and Captain Robert Kingsmill, R.N.,<sup>(156)</sup> and two Commonalty candidates, Lord Daer and Lord Haddo.<sup>(157)</sup> Lester headed the poll on 21st June with 50 votes. Stuart obtained 49, Taylor 48 and Kingsmill 45 votes. The votes cast by the householders for the Commonalty candidates were disallowed by the Sheriff.<sup>(158)</sup>

Taylor and Kingsmill and the Commonalty candidates made petitions against the return of Lester and Stuart. The Commons upheld the Corporation's exclusive franchise but seated Taylor in place of Stuart.<sup>(159)</sup> Lester was forced to resign his seat as a government contractor but had no difficulty in winning the subsequent by-election against Daer, standing again for the Commonalty and receiving 3 votes from the burgesses.<sup>(160)</sup> His petition against Lester's return was eventually heard and rejected in March 1793.<sup>(161)</sup>

Preparations for this election had begun in the town as early as January 1789. In May Lester played a leading role in securing the admission of 16 new burgesses, all but two of whom were supporters of the administration.<sup>(162)</sup> He was then quick to seize the opportunity presented by W.M. Pitt's decision to stand for one of the county seats. After negotiations with George Rose at the latter's country house in the New Forest, Lester was accepted as one of the administration's candidates.<sup>(163)</sup> Lester noted in his diary that Rose "desires to turn out Mr. Taylor and proposes some great man to join me".<sup>(164)</sup> This proved to be Sir Charles Middleton, a friend of W.M. Pitt, then anxious to find a less troublesome seat than Rochester. He soon concluded that Poole would be equally as difficult and declined to stand.<sup>(165)</sup> It was apparently left to Lester to find an alternative candidate, and he approached Stuart, Bute's younger son, then living near Poole, on behalf of Rose. He agreed to advance £2,000 and stand with Lester.<sup>(166)</sup>

The re-emergence of the Commonalty at this election indicated that its supporters had recovered heart since the failure of the parliamentary reform movement after 1785. Reformers throughout the country were inspired by the coming of the French Revolution shortly after the commemoration of the centenary of the Glorious Revolution.<sup>(167)</sup> In Poole it is likely that the recent struggle of the householders with the Corporation over the rights of presentation to the parish church gave further encouragement to those who claimed the parliamentary franchise as ratepayers. Since a number of the Commonalty were Dissenters, the heightened tension between Dissenters and High Churchmen, caused by the Dissenters' attack on the Test and Corporation Acts,<sup>(168)</sup> probably contributed as well to the determination of the Commonalty to come forward in the 1790 election. In view of the ambiguous attitude of the Whigs to parliamentary reform, and in order to make the most impressive demonstration of their cause, they preferred to support their own candidates rather than Taylor and Kingsmill. They added noise and excitement to the election but failed to persuade the overwhelming majority of the Corporation.



The result of the contest in Poole in many ways bears out the verdict of most historians on this general election - that it showed the Whigs at least holding their own and limiting the gains of the administration to the minimum at a time when Pitt had reached the peak of public esteem.<sup>(169)</sup> Taylor, it is true had only scraped home but Kingsmill had done well to poll 45 votes, lacking as he did the close acquaintance Taylor enjoyed with the Poole electors. There is however, no evidence that the efforts to improve the Whig national party organisation were of any help to their candidates in the borough.<sup>(170)</sup> Although Taylor had approached Adam, he stood for Poole on his own initiative, and he and Kingsmill were opposed by Daer who was in fact the official opposition candidate at Canterbury.<sup>(171)</sup> So far from assisting the Whig candidates in Poole the party organisation thus hindered them.

Why then was the result a comparative disappointment to the administration? Their partisans had after all won the preliminary contest in the Corporation in 1789 when they succeeded in adding 14 more voters to their strength. A partial and technical explanation of the narrowness of the result in 1790 lies in the effects of the working of Crewe's Act,<sup>(172)</sup> which had disfranchised revenue officers in parliamentary elections but left them qualified to vote in corporation elections. The narrow majority for the addition of new members to the Corporation had been achieved with the votes of 5 revenue officers who were unable to give this direct support to the government in the parliamentary elections.<sup>(173)</sup> They had nonetheless added 14 more supporters to the group siding with the friends of the administration.

A comparison of the manner in which the burgesses of the opposing groups in the Corporation voted in the municipal and the general elections shows however that while 5 of the 39 friends of the administration in 1789 deserted Stuart and Lester in the general election, and 2 further burgesses gave only one vote for the ministry's candidates, the opponents of government remained virtually unanimous in supporting the Whig candidates in 1790.<sup>(174)</sup> The election thus reflected some movement of opinion in Poole away from the government.

On the other hand, the administration continued to profit from the official influence remaining to it after the disfranchisement of the revenue officers. Two of the three R.N. officers identified amongst the voters supported the government candidates and seven of the nine voters related to the Customs officers in the port also voted for Lester and Stuart.<sup>(175)</sup> In view of the narrow majority the ministry's candidates obtained, their votes were decisive.

While the use of bribery and influence make it impossible to measure the causes of the movement of opinion in 1790 with any great accuracy, it is nevertheless very likely that two issues resulted in the large amount of support given to the opposition candidates. These were the state of the Newfoundland trade and the recent controversy over the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.

Pitt's government had done much to try to satisfy the Newfoundland merchants. Food supplies from America had been allowed into the island since 1785<sup>(176)</sup> and the threat of Bermudean, and therefore other colonial competition in the trade, had been warded off.<sup>(177)</sup> These measures did not however placate the traditionally grasping and pessimistic traders - they demanded firmer measures to guarantee the America supplies. The decline in the fisheries beginning in 1788 also made them more sensitive to the supposed threat from the French shore fisheries<sup>(178)</sup> and the government's continuation of reform in law and government in Newfoundland. Finally, early in 1790, they were naturally alarmed by the prospect of war with Spain, and possibly France, over the Nootka Sound dispute.<sup>(179)</sup> In the period immediately before the election the mobilisation of the fleet meant that the hated press-gangs were out in the town and the neighbouring district.<sup>(180)</sup> Taylor was cleverly making capital out of the merchants' fears for their ships and cargoes in the Commons.<sup>(181)</sup> Faced with these difficulties, many of the Poole merchants used the election as an opportunity to protest at what they regarded as the government's neglect of their vital interests. Significantly, a majority of this group amongst the electors supported the opposition candidates, voting 23 to 14 for Taylor and Kingsmill.<sup>(182)</sup>

The other issue which cost the ministry support in this election was the disappointment felt by the Dissenters over the failure of the attempt to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts. Feiling argued that the Dissenters did not desert Pitt in 1790<sup>(183)</sup> but his conclusion has been proved wrong.<sup>(184)</sup> The behaviour of the Dissenters amongst the Poole electors indicates that they had been impressed by the efforts made by some Whigs for their cause. Of the 29 voters who can be identified as Quakers, Unitarians or Presbyterians, no fewer than 21 supported the Whig candidates, while 3 of the men who deserted the administration between the Corporation election of 1789 and the general election of 1790 were also Dissenters.<sup>(185)</sup>

The result of the election thus demonstrates the continuing development of an independent and hostile attitude towards government amongst the voters. Pitt's administration was unfortunate in that the election

coincided with ill feeling over the Newfoundland trade and the Test and Corporation Acts. However, these two issues were not transient. The conflict between the merchants and government over the future of Newfoundland and its trade had been growing since the 1760s and had been a major cause for the rise of opposition in the town since that decade. In 1790 feeling over this issue resulted in a much stronger opposition vote than at any previous election since Mauger's first narrow success in 1769. Ultimately Pitt was able to save one seat only because the reduced government electoral interest was used effectively.

The resentment of the Dissenters at their under-privileged status was one aspect of "the new spirit of English provincial initiative"<sup>(186)</sup> arising at this time. Together, the concern of the merchants for their trade and that of the Dissenters for their status, represented a growing tendency to self-assertiveness amongst the political and social leaders of the local community. This was to prompt further expressions of independence and opposition in the town in the early 19th century.

1. Colonel, later Lieutenant General, Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., (1726-83) had made his name in India, especially as the victor at the battle of Wandawash in 1760. In 1763 he bought an estate near Fording-bridge, Hants, some 30 miles from Poole. M.P. for Leicester 1768-74, he returned to India in 1778 as C-in-C. No evidence has been found to confirm Namier's suggestion that Coote came to Poole because of an association with Calcraft. He was introduced in 1774 by Thomas Erle of Charborough. H.C. Wyllly, A Life of Lieutenant General Sir Eyre Coote, K.B., (Oxford, 1922), pp. 74-8, 121-2, 130-5; L. Namier and J. Brooke, eds., The History of Parliament, The House of Commons, 1754-1790, Vol.I, p. 268, Vol.II, p. 252.
2. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 5, Isaac Lester's Diary, 11th October, 1774; S.J., 17th, 24th October, 1774. John Williams (b.1736) was possibly M.P. for Saltash for a brief period and possibly a candidate for Fowey in 1774. Namier did not refer to his appearance in Poole in 1774 but it is very likely that it was the same man. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, p. 644; B.L. Add. MSS., 47568, ff. 70-1, James Hare to C.J. Fox, 12th October, 1774.
3. Commons Journals, XXXV, pp. 23-4, 206, 221, 233, 238; T.H.B. Oldfield, An Entire and Complete History, Personal and Political of the Boroughs of Great Britain, (2 vols., 1792), Vol.I, pp. 302-14.
4. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 175.
5. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 19th June, 1770, 14th, 16th, 24th September, 1772.
6. Ibid, 5th May, 1773, 27th January, 1774. Admiral Shuldham (c.1717-98) entered Parliament for Fowey in 1774. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, pp. 437-8.
7. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 13th September, 1774. John Pitt (c.1706-87) was Chatham's cousin. He was Surveyor General of Woods and Forests 1756-63 and 1768-86. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, p. 284.
8. James Hare had married the sister of Peter Jolliffe of Poole.
9. S.J., 24th October, 1774. (The name 'Commonalty' was taken from the legal style of the Corporation of Poole as "the mayor, bailiffs, burgesses, and commonalty of the town of Poole". John Sydenham, The History of the Town and County of Poole, pp. 180, 215, 265-7).
10. S.J., 24th October, 1774.

11. Ibid.
12. Dr. Brooke suggests that government activity may not have increased significantly in 1774. (J. Brooke, The History of Parliament, The House of Commons 1754-1790, Introductory Survey, p. 112). However, Robinson seems to have made greater efforts in 1774 than his predecessors. (B. Donoghue, British Politics and the American Revolution, The Path to War 1773-1775, (1964), pp. 182-8).
13. Dame Lucy Sutherland, The East India Company in 18th Century Politics, (Oxford, 1952), p. 207, note i.
14. S.J., 11th April, 1768.
15. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 221, 225-6.
16. Thomas Hyde, Sheriff 1763, Mayor 1764. A merchant with interests in the oil trade from Newfoundland and clay, he received a government pension of £50 for services his family had performed for William III in 1688-9. Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers 1720-1728, CCLX, p. 34; Barbara Kerr, Bound to the Soil. A Social History of Dorset 1750-1918, (1968), pp. 33-6, 44-5.
17. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.3, Benjamin Lester to John Robinson, August, 1780.
18. Lester's references to Hyde in his diaries and correspondence were invariably hostile.
19. S.J., 25th October, 1773; K. Matthews, 'The West of England - Newfoundland Fisheries (chiefly in the 17th and 18th centuries)', unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1968, pp. 395-6; G.J. Davies, 'England and Newfoundland: Policy and Trade 1660-1783', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Southampton, 1980, pp. 185-7.
20. S.J., 1st April, 1771; H.E.S. Fisher, The Portugal Trade: a Study of Anglo-Portuguese Commerce 1700-1770, (1971), p. 45.
21. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 23rd September, 2nd, 30th October, 22nd December, 1770, 1st, 11th February, 1771; S.J., 1st October, 3rd December, 1770.
22. Donoghue, op. cit., p. 181.
23. Ibid., p. 197; Brooke, op. cit., pp. 109-10.
24. Donoghue, op. cit., pp. 152-4, 197-200.
25. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 397, 400.
26. Donald F. Chard, 'Joseph Mauger, the Creation and Defence of a Colonial Fortune and its Implications for Nova Scotia's Relationship to New England 1749-1784', unpublished paper.
27. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 22-3, 112; Ian R. Christie, Myth and Reality in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics, (1970), pp. 251-3, 259-60, 274-5; John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 65-6.

28. Chapter Five, pp. 117-9.
29. Bodleian Library, Gough MSS., ff. 277-8, 283, John Howell to Richard Gough, 23/24th February, 25th October, 1779; Merle M. Bevingdon, ed., The Memoirs of James Stephen, (1954), pp. 65-7.
30. Parliamentary History, 18, p. 377, 22nd February, 1775.
31. John W. Derry, Charles James Fox, (1972), pp. 31-5, 42-4, 47-9, 52-3, 79-82. The Salisbury Journal of 14th November, 1774 reported that Fox was considered a likely candidate for appointment to the Admiralty Board.
32. S.J., 24th October, 1774.
33. Edward Lascelles, Life of Charles James Fox, (1936), p. 58. He was also a candidate supported by the householders of Pontefract in 1774. B.L. Add. MSS., 47568, ff. 70-1, Moore (?) to C.J. Fox, 12th October, 1774; S.J., 24th October, 1774. Fox was however returned at Malmesbury in 1774.
34. Peter Jolliffe (?-1786), Sheriff 1759, Mayor 1768. He belonged to an extensive and long established merchant family with interests in the Carolina and Newfoundland trades. In 1771 he became bankrupt. (S.J., 11th March, 13th May, 1771). His revived business interests were afterwards apparently completely ruined by the embargo placed on trade with Britain by the South Carolina Assembly in 1775. Fox obtained a place for him c.1782 from the Prince of Wales. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 23, George Garland to John Dent, 26th, 29th January, 1821; Leila Sellers, Charleston Business on the Eve of the American Revolution, (University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p. 228.
35. Derry, op. cit., pp. 48-51. The Salisbury Journal carried frequent reports on Fox's activities, see for example issues dated 9th August, 13th December, 1773 and 15th August, 1774.
36. Brooke, op. cit., pp. 116-7; Vincent T. Harlow, The Founding of the Second British Empire 1763-1793, (2 vols., 1952-64), Vol.I, pp. 493-500.
37. Ian R. Christie, The End of North's Ministry 1780-1782, (1958), pp. 26-29, 261-5, 270, 285-6.
38. Archibald S. Foord, His Majesty's Opposition 1714-1830, p. 348.
39. H. Butterfield, George III, Lord North and the People, 1779-1780, (1949), pp. 117-37.
40. John Cannon, The Fox-North Coalition, Crisis of the Constitution 1782-4, (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 228-9.
41. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 270.

42. Chard, op. cit., p. 20. (Mauger had opened a wine business in Poole with his Nova Scotia partner, Michael Franklin, in 1777, but withdrew from this venture in February, 1780, S.J., 24th March, 1777, 7th, 28th February, 1780).
43. Benjamin Lester (1724-1802), Sheriff 1777, Mayor 1779, 1781-3, M.P. (Poole) 1790-96, built up a large share in the Newfoundland fisheries. He spent much of his life in Newfoundland from c.1737 until 1777. D. Beamish, J. Hillier and H.F.V. Johnstone, Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset, Vol.I, pp. 89-112.
44. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 15th June, 1773, 28th April, 2nd June, 1775, 14th November, 1776.
45. Lester-Garland Collection, Poole Reference Library, Eyre Coote to Isaac Lester, 22nd April, 11th December, 1775, 23rd April, 1776.
46. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 11th November, 1777; Lester to Eyre Coote, 23rd October, 1775.
47. Palliser's Act (15 Geo 3, c.31) so called after Sir Hugh Palliser, Governor of Newfoundland in 1764 who framed the terms of the Bill. The Act was designed to ensure that the fisheries remained "a nursery of seamen" by restricting land ownership, ensuring that the employees of merchants returned home after the fishing season and encouraging wider participation by English ports in the migratory fishery. The Act was largely ineffective but angered the merchants. Petitions for its repeal in 1776 and 1779 failed. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 443-451; Davies, op. cit., pp. 172-82.
48. Commons Journals, XXXV, pp. 164, 174; T.W. Copeland, ed., The Correspondence of Edmund Burke, Vol.III, pp. 118, 129, 174, 223; The Public Ledger, 15th March, 1775; S.J., 13th March, 1775.
49. S.J., 23rd April, 1775.
50. Isaac Lester to Eyre Coote, 23rd October, 1775.
51. Colin Bonwick, English Radicals and the American Revolution, (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1977), pp. 51, 76-7.
52. J. Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III, pp. 214-5.
53. Bonwick, op. cit., pp. 67-8, 70-6; John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, op. cit., pp. 65-7.
54. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 26th, 27th, 29th May, 1776; D.C.R.O., D. 365, X. 3, Benjamin Lester to Henry Penton, 9th May, 1782.

55. Derry, op. cit., pp. 62-71; Paul Langford, 'The Rockingham Whigs and America', in Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants, Essays in Eighteenth Century History presented to Dame Lucy Sutherland, Ann Whiteman, J.S. Bromley and P.G.M. Dickson, eds., (Oxford, 1973), p. 150.
56. D.C.R.O., N.3, TR.1, Unitarian Church, Poole, Indenture, 16th August, 1780. (Milner's occupation is unknown but it is very likely that he was a Newfoundland merchant).
57. C.C. Bonwick, 'The English Dissenters and the American Revolution' in Contrast and Connection, Bicentennial Essays in Anglo-American History, H.C. Allen and Roger Thompson, eds., (1976), Chapter 4, passim; Caroline Robbins, The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), pp. 335-44.
58. Isaac Lester to Eyre Coote, 23rd October, 1775.
59. Bonwick, op. cit., pp. 87-88. Dr. Bonwick also points out that not all parliamentary reformers were opposed to the American War. Ibid, pp. 137-8 and note 49.
60. Ian R. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics, (1962), Chapter III, passim.
61. S.J., 31st January, 1st May, 1780; Christopher Wyvill, Political Papers: Chiefly Respecting the Attempt of the County of York and Other Considerable Districts, Commenced in 1779 and Continued during Several Subsequent Years to Effect a Reformation of the Parliament of Great Britain, (6 vols., York, 1794-1802), Vol.I, pp. 199, 201-5.
62. Commons Journals, XXXV, p. 164; Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 25-26th February, 1775.
63. Commons Journals, XXXV, p. 174; Parliamentary History, 18, pp. 426-7; T.W. Copeland, op. cit., Vol.III, p. 129.
64. John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform, op. cit., p. 70 and note 3.
65. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 25-26th November, 1774.
66. Ibid, 27th February, 1775; Matthews, op. cit., pp. 458-9.
67. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 462-3.
68. Commons Journals, XXXV, pp. 417, 448, 744; Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 7th August, 9th, 12th October, 1775; Eyre Coote to Lord North, 7th August, 1775; Eyre Coote to Isaac and Benjamin Lester, 8th August, 1775; Eyre Coote to Isaac Lester, 21st October, 1775.
69. Matthews, op. cit., p. 461.



70. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 16th, 18th, 19th September, 1775; Isaac Lester to Eyre Coote, 18th September, 23rd October, 1775; S.J., 2nd September, 1776.
71. Isaac Lester to Eyre Coote, 23rd October, 1775.
72. Frank O'Gorman, The Rise of Party in England, The Rockingham Whigs 1760-82, (1975), pp. 327-331, 346-8, 351-7, 361-2, 373, 379-80, 392, 432, 438-442, 473-4.
73. S.J., 18th November, 16th, 23rd December, 1776; Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 7th November, 9th December, 1776.
74. One of Hyde's supporters alleged that the American Congress had put a price on the head of Benjamin Lester for supporting the Fisheries Act in 1775 and that American privateers attacking British ships off Newfoundland said they were taking the cargoes of fish for this reason. Isaac Lester's Diary, 13th November, 1776.
75. Donoghue, op. cit., pp. 40-1, 44, 283-4; Butterfield, op. cit., pp. 28-30, 34-5, 119-20, 126-7.
76. Eyre Coote to Isaac Lester, 11th December, 1775; Idem to Idem, 31st May, 1777.
77. William Morton Pitt (1754-1836) M.P. for Poole 1780-90, Dorset 1790-1826. A cousin of William Pitt. He became an evangelical and supported numerous charitable causes. Namier and Brook, op. cit., Vol.III, p. 302; Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, the Age of Wilberforce, (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 55-6, 235, 349, 356; Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 24th, 29th May, 1777.
78. Lester-Garland Collection, Poole Reference Library, John Henning to Isaac Lester, 27th January, 1778.
79. He died on 20th September, 1778. (The last entries in Lester's Diary concern his preparations for the mayoral election).
80. Butterfield, op. cit., pp. 27-8, 42-68, 71-116.
81. A. Temple Patterson, The Other Armada, the Franco-Spanish Attempt to Invade Britain in 1779, (Manchester, 1960), pp. 112, 118-20, 130, 216.
82. Butterfield, op. cit., pp. 53-55.
83. Patterson, op. cit., pp. 15-20.
84. Three privateers were then fitted out. S.J., 19th July, 1779. Coastal defences had been made ready in 1778. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 26th May, 30th June, 1778.

85. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 475-482; Davies, op. cit., pp. 368-9.  
(The interruption of trade, especially by American privateers until 1780, meant that the migratory fishery declined and some of the lesser merchants in Newfoundland were forced out of business).
86. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X. 3, Lester to Lord Sandwich, 9th September, 1780; Idem, to John Robinson, 9th September, 1780.
87. John Adams (?1746-1817), possibly the Member for Carmarthen, who also tried to secure election for Cardigan in 1780. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 11.
88. MS., Result of 1780 election and select committee's composition, 29th January, 1782, belonging to the author.
89. Commons Journals, XXXVIII, pp. 27-8, 63, 337, 595, 652, 663.
90. Windsor MSS., Parliamentary State 1780.
91. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X. 3, Lester to John Robinson, 5th August, 1780; Idem to Idem, undated, attributed to 1780.
92. Windsor MSS., Parliamentary State, op. cit.; I.R. Christie, The End of North's Ministry, op. cit., pp. 37-8.
93. Lord Herbert, ed., The Letters and Diaries of Henry, tenth Earl of Pembroke and his circle, (2 vols., 1939), Vol.II, pp. 42-3.
94. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X. 3, Lester to Joseph Gulston, 1st February, 16th March, 1781; Idem to John Robinson, 11th March, 1782; I.R. Christie, The End of North's Ministry, op. cit., Appendix II, p. 393.
95. I.R. Christie, op. cit., pp. 24-6, 159-163.
96. Brooke, The House of Commons 1754-1790, op. cit., pp. 119-122.
97. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 8, Benjamin Lester's Diary, 1st April, 1784.
98. Michael Angelo Taylor (?1757-1834) M.P. for Poole 1784-90, Heytesbury 22nd December 1790-February 1791, Poole 1791-1796, Aldeburgh 1796-March 1800, Durham March 1800-1802, Rye 1806-7, Ilchester 1807-12, Poole 1812-18, Durham 1818-31, Sudbury 1832-16th July 1834. He initially supported Pitt except on the Westminster election in 1785. After 1786 he joined Fox and became one of the managers of the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, p. 517; George Chalmers, Parliamentary Portraits or the Character of the British Senate, (2 vols., London, 1795), Vol.I, pp. 61-3.
99. Benjamin Lester's Diary, op. cit., 24-26th March, 1784; Idem to Captain Parker, 29th April, 1784.
100. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 270-1.

101. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X. 3, Lester to Joseph Gulston, 30th November, 1780, 6th, 22nd August, 1781.
102. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.3/X.4, Lester to Joseph Gulston, December, 1781, February, 10th July, 8th November, 18th December, 1783, 22nd February, 1784. (Gulston inherited a large fortune from his father which he and his equally extravagant wife soon spent. He was forced to sell his London house and retire to a cottage in Dorset. In 1784 he disposed of his library and in 1786 sold his collection of prints for a very low price. John Nichols, Illustrations of the Literary History of the 18th Century, Vol.5, pp. 26-30, 60).
103. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.3/X.4, Lester to Captain Parker, 19th October, 1782; Idem to Henry Penton, 22nd January, 1783.
104. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to Henry Penton, 2nd April, 1784.
105. Brooke, The House of Commons 1754-1790, op. cit., pp. 126-7.
106. John Cannon, The Fox-North Coalition, op. cit., p. 126.
107. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.3, Lester to Captain Parker, 27th April, 1782; Lester to Joseph Gulston, 20th September, 1782.
108. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to John Robinson, 2nd, 20th, 25th February, 1783.
109. I.R. Christie, The End of North's Ministry, op.cit., pp. 162-74.
110. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to John Robinson, 20th February, 1783; Idem to Joseph Gulston, March (?) 1783; Idem to John Cartwright, December (?) 1783.
111. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 27-29th February, 1784.
112. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to Joseph Gulston, 22nd February 1784.
113. Benjamin Lester's Diary, op. cit., 24-26th March, 1784.
114. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.3, Lester to Penton, 9th May, 1782.
115. O'Gorman, op. cit., pp. 453-4, 467-8.
116. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.3/X.4, Benjamin Lester to W.M. Pitt, 10th December, 1782; Lester's Diary, op. cit., 16th November, 1782, 6th January, 1783.
117. Harlow, op. cit., pp. 343-4, 395-400, 406-7.
118. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 494-5; Davies, op. cit., pp. 224-7; Lester to W.M. Pitt, 1st, 13th February, 1783; Lester to Lord Sheffield, 6th March, 1784.
119. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to John Robinson, 21st February, 1783; Idem to W.M. Pitt, 29th March, 1783; Lester's Diary, op. cit., 13th, 17th December, 1782, 24th February, 1783.
120. Harlow, op. cit., pp. 459-60.
121. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 498-502, 523-552.



122. Cannon, The Fox-North Coalition, op. cit., pp. 91, 95.
123. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to W.M. Pitt, 21st January, 1783; Wyvill Papers, op. cit., Vol.II, p. 99.
124. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to Captain Parker, 29th April, 1784.
125. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 27-29th February, 1784.
126. Cannon, The Fox-North Coalition, op. cit., pp. 230-3.
127. P. Kelly, 'Radicalism and Public Opinion in the General Election of 1784', B.I.H.R., Vol.XLV, (1972), pp. 73-88.
128. Cannon, The Fox-North Coalition, op. cit., p. 223-7.
129. John Ehrman, The Younger Pitt, the Years of Acclaim, (1969), p. 151.
130. P. Kelly, op. cit., and 'British Politics 1783-4: the emergence and triumph of the younger Pitt's administration', B.I.H.R., Vol.LIV, (May, 1981), pp. 62-78.
131. W.T. Laprade, ed., 'The Parliamentary Papers of John Robinson', Camden Society, 3rd Series, Vol.XXXIII, pp. 72,112.
132. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to John Robinson, 23rd February, 1783; Idem to Henry Penton, 25th February, 1783.
133. Laprade, op. cit., pp. 115, 127.
134. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to Lord North, 1st June, 1784; Brooke, The House of Commons 1754-1790, op. cit., pp. 137-9.
135. Ehrman, op. cit., p. 147; Cannon, The Fox-North Coalition, op. cit., pp. 210-8.
136. P.B.A., ME.20, List of Burgesses, 1785.
137. Cannon, op. cit., p. 211.
138. Ehrman, op. cit., p. 148. (Professor Cannon makes this point also in his study of this election, pp. 225-6).
139. L.G. Mitchell, Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party 1782-1794, (Oxford, 1971), pp. 102-3, 162; Ibid, p. 104 and note 3.
140. Parliamentary History, 24, p. 987.
141. Chalmers, op. cit., Vol.I, p. 61; Parliamentary History, 24, p. 25.
142. P.B.A., Corporation Record Book 1702-1816, ff. 402-5, 15-18th June, 1784.
143. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to M.A. Taylor, 2nd, 17th May, 5th July, 1784.
144. John Jeffery (1751-1822) Mayor 1798, M.P. for Poole 1796-1810, a Quaker who married into the wealthy Quaker family of the Whites. He inherited part of this family's great fortune and a share in the Newfoundland trade. Beamish, Hillier and Johnstone, op. cit., p. 139.

145. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 15th September, 1786; 14th September, 1787.
146. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.4, Lester to Gulston, 11th November, 1784;  
Lester's Diary, op. cit., 23rd July, 1786.
147. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 1st, 19th September, 1788. George Garland (1753-1825) Sheriff 1784, Mayor 1788, 1810, M.P. for Poole 1801-6, was Lester's principal business aide. Beamish, Hillier and Johnstone, op. cit., pp. 111-4.
148. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 104.
149. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 557-561; A.H. McIntock, The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland 1783-1832, (1941), pp. 41-51.
150. P.R.O. Colonial Office, 194/21/84, 10th March, 1785; C.O. 194/21/163, 26th November, 1788.
151. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 552-555.
152. P.B.A., Handbill, 'Amicus', 6th February, 1789.
153. G.M. Ditchfield, 'The parliamentary struggle over the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-1790', E.H.R., LXXXIX, (1974), pp. 551-577.
154. Christie, Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform, op. cit., pp. 218-221; Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 107-116; Ehrman, op. cit., pp. 612-5.
155. Hon, Charles Stuart (1753-1801), M.P. for Bossiney 20th May 1776-1790, Ayr Burghs 1790-May 1794, Poole 1796-25th March, 1801. He was the 4th son of the Earl of Bute. He became a Major General in 1793 and Lieutenant General in 1798. He supported Pitt after 1786, except on the Richmond fortification plans. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, pp. 498-500; William Anderson, The Scottish Nation, (3 vols., Edinburgh and London, 1868), Vol.III, pp. 540-1.
156. Robert Kingsmill (c.1730-1805), M.P. for Yarmouth, Isle of Wight 1779-80 and Tregony 1784-90. Admiral 1799. Elected as a government candidate in 1784, he supported parliamentary reform but opposed Pitt on the Regency. Namier and Brooke, op. cit., Vol.III, p. 12.
157. Lord Basil William Douglas (1763-94), was the eldest son of the 4th Earl of Selkirk. He became a member of the London Corresponding Society, visited France and sat in the Edinburgh Convention as 'Citizen Daer'. Anon., Biographical Index to the Present House of Lords, (1808), p. 538; P.A. Brown, The French Revolution in English History, (Cass Reprint, 1965), p. 91.  
George, Lord Haddo (1764-1791) was son of the 3rd Earl of Aberdeen. Annual Register, 1791.
158. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 21st June, 1790.
159. Commons Journals, XLVI, pp. 25-6, 163, 165, 222-3, 243.

160. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 22nd January, 7-8th February, 9th, 11-12th March, 1791.
161. Commons Journals, XLVI, pp. 190-1, 355, 424; XLVII, pp. 46, 426, 503, 725; XLVIII, pp. 18, 97, 157, 264, 277, 384-5, 395.
162. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 22nd, 24th, 26-27th, 29th January, 5th, 9-10th May, 1789; P.B.A., S.1638, MS., Poll Book, 1790.
163. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 17th, 25th, 28-30th September, 1st October, 1789.
164. Ibid, 1st October, 1789.
165. Ibid, 14th, 23rd October, 1789; Georgiana, Lady Chatterton, Memoirs, Personal and Historical of Admiral Lord Gambier, (2 vols., 1861), Vol.II, p. 2; Letters of Lord Barham, Navy Record Society, (3 vols., 1907-11), Vol.II, (XXXVIII), pp. 329, 331-2.
166. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 8th, 10th November, 1789.
167. Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, op. cit., p. 116 and note 1.
168. F.C. Mather, 'Church, parliament and penal laws: some Anglo-Scottish interactions in the eighteenth century', E.H.R., Vol.XCII, (1977), pp. 540-72.
169. J.W. Derry, Charles James Fox, op. cit., p.291; F. O'Gorman, The Whig Party and the French Revolution, (1967), Appendix 1(b), p. 248; Ehrman, op. cit., pp. 608-9, 665-6.
170. D.E. Ginter, Whig Organisation in the General Election of 1790: Selections from the Blair Adam Papers, (University of California, 1967), pp. xx-xxiv.
171. Ibid, pp. xli, note 26, 14, 201-2, 225-6, 258-9 and note 4.
172. For the effects of Crewe's Act see: A.S. Foord, 'The Waning of the Influence of the Crown', E.H.R., Vol.LXII, (1947), pp. 484-507; Betty Kemp, 'Crewe's Act', E.H.R., Vol.LXVIII, (1953), pp. 258-263. The working of the Act in Poole suggests that there is a need for further research into its consequences in boroughs like Poole where the franchise was held by members of corporations.
173. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 12th May, 1789; Poll Book, 1790, op. cit.
174. Poll Book, 1790, op. cit. (Only one of the burgesses opposing the admission of new burgesses in 1789 voted for Lester and Stuart in 1790).
175. Poll Book, 1790, op. cit.
176. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 509-10.
177. McLintock, op. cit., pp. 39-41.
178. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 494-9; McLintock, op. cit., pp. 41-51.
179. Ehrman, op. cit., pp. 553 ff.

180. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 10th May, 1790.
181. Western Flying Post, 17th May, 1790.
182. Poll Book, 1790, op. cit.
183. K.G. Feiling, The Second Tory Party, 1714-1832, (1959), p. 183.
184. Ditchfield, op. cit., pp. 575-6.
185. Poll Book, 1790, op. cit.
186. Donald Read, The English Provinces c.1760-1960: a Study in Influence, (1964), p. 21.

CHAPTER FIVE  
THE CORPORATION 1774-1830

During the last quarter of the 18th century the Corporation was faced by two challenges to its authority. One of these came from within the town and was the attempt by the ratepaying householders to widen the membership of the Corporation and gain the parliamentary franchise. The other came from a renewed conflict with the Lord of the Manor of Canford and Poole. The Corporation succeeded in resisting the claims of the householders and benefited from the solution to the disputes with the Lord of the Manor. In the early 19th century the Corporation undertook reforms in its administration and by admitting more members became more representative of the community.

The Corporation and the Ratepayers

The conflict between the Corporation and the Commonalty over the right to the parliamentary franchise beginning in 1774 was not confined to this issue alone.

The Corporation's control over the Parish of St. James was also attacked by the ratepayers in 1775. Until this date members of the Corporation had monopolised the Watch Committee, elected by the ratepayers in accordance with the terms of the 1756 Improvement Act. In 1775 however a much increased poll at the Vestry resulted in the replacement of the former members of this committee by a fresh group of 11 members, of whom only 4 were burgesses. At the same time 5 of the same non-burgesses were elected to the Workhouse Committee which had also been dominated by the members of the Corporation previously.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1776 the poll for the committees increased again from 138 votes to 242 and only 2 members of the Corporation secured election to the Watch Committee.<sup>(2)</sup>

The ratepayers did not maintain their initial success entirely however. In 1777 a reduced poll of 99 votes resulted in the election of a majority of burgesses on the two committees.<sup>(3)</sup> Thereafter members of the Corporation kept a majority on the Watch Committee until 1781, when again only 2 burgesses were elected.<sup>(4)</sup> In 1783 members of the Corporation recovered and held their majority on the committee but it appears that an accommodation had been reached between the Corporation and the ratepayers for from this date some of the leading ratepayers were regularly returned as a strong minority on both parish committees and also served on ad hoc parish committees.<sup>(5)</sup>

The accommodation did not prevent the renewal of the former dispute between the Corporation and the ratepayers over the right of presentation to the living of St. James. In 1788 the ratepayers refused to accept the



candidate chosen by the Corporation and pursued their claim in a Chancery suit.<sup>(6)</sup> Before this was dismissed they again challenged the Corporation's claim to the exclusive right of presentation in a further election to fill a vacancy in 1791. On this occasion the Corporation chose one of its members as the Rector of St. James but the ratepayers' opposition to the appointment was unsuccessful.<sup>(7)</sup>

The ratepayers who supported the Commonalty in 1774-5 included John Bundock, a corn-factor who had been an Overseer of the Poor in 1771, Constable in 1774 and Church Warden in 1775.<sup>(8)</sup> Other ratepayers who were active in the parish elections between 1775 and 1784 and can be identified later as supporters of the Commonalty's claim to the franchise<sup>(9)</sup> were: Thomas Anstey, a sailmaker, Church Warden 1772-3,<sup>(10)</sup> George Durell, a Unitarian merchant,<sup>(11)</sup> Richard Hayward, Church Warden 1776,<sup>(12)</sup> Richard Miller, a Congregationalist surgeon,<sup>(13)</sup> Robert Miller, a cooper, and Richard Watts, a coal merchant, Church Warden 1772-5.<sup>(14)</sup>

When the Commonalty first emerged in 1774 they did not represent a truly radical movement of opinion. Their grievance against the Corporation was that they did not enjoy the parliamentary franchise and this grievance stemmed from the Corporation's failure to admit sufficient new members in recent years to keep pace with the number of individuals who aspired to join it. No groups of new burgesses had been admitted since 1764, and those few individuals who had been made burgesses since then were relatives of existing members of the Corporation.<sup>(15)</sup> The supporters of the Commonalty who have been identified belonged to an order in society who could reasonably expect that their economic status, and in some cases their service to the town in parish offices, would be followed by their admission to the Corporation. The prosperity the town had enjoyed since 1750 had increased the number of those who aspired to join the Corporation. Membership of the Corporation was also becoming more prized. The contested elections of 1765 and 1768-9 meant that there were additional favours or bribes for the burgesses. Municipal life had more superficial dignity once the Corporation occupied its new Guildhall in 1761.<sup>(16)</sup>

The Corporation's behaviour in the 1760s indicated that it was becoming more exclusive in its attitude. The growing attractiveness of membership of the Corporation naturally influenced the existing members to guard their privileged positions more keenly. The contested parliamentary elections meant that the political interests in the Corporation were more careful over the admission of new members lest they sacrificed political advantages.

The relatively small number of Dissenters who were admitted to the Corporation in 1764 was an indication of the Corporation's tendency towards greater exclusiveness. The creation of the Congregational Church after the final schism amongst the Poole Dissenters in 1759 had the effect of emphasizing the separate nature of those Dissenters who joined it. Drawn predominantly from the more humble ranks of society, they readily accepted the evangelical ministry the Church provided. The leaders of the Corporation, who took a less enthusiastic view of religious belief, inevitably felt that on the whole its members were unsuitable recruits for the Corporation. They preferred to admit Dissenters from higher reaches of society who were willing to practise occasional conformity or join the Anglican Church.<sup>(17)</sup>

There had been prospects that a further group of new burgesses would be admitted in 1766 but nothing came of this.<sup>(18)</sup> Again in 1775 it was anticipated that a large number of admissions would be made because the Corporation agreed that each of the existing members should nominate one new member.<sup>(19)</sup> In the event however, only 16 new members were created and they were drawn overwhelmingly from the families of the leading men in the Corporation. This was caused partly by the antagonism aroused by the Commonalty's agitation in 1774-5 and partly by the mutual jealousies of the two principal interests which had emerged in the Corporation.<sup>(20)</sup>

The sense of frustration felt by the Commonalty at their failure to win the parliamentary franchise in 1775 or to gain admission to the Corporation helps to explain the more generalised radical attitude they adopted in 1775 and their persistence in supporting parliamentary reform subsequently.

The attack made on the power of the Corporation in the affairs of the parish was clearly another result of the Commonalty's disappointments in 1775. They attacked the Corporation for providing "ill government without order, anarchy without decency, and knavery without sense of shame",<sup>(21)</sup> but there is no evidence that they had any specific complaint about the administration of the town other than the Corporation's refusal to meet their demands over membership of the Corporation and the parliamentary franchise. Neither the Vestry Minutes nor the records of the Lighting and Watch Commissioners<sup>(22)</sup> reveal any controversial matters which could have prompted the attack on the Corporation's power in the parish. The election of ratepayers to the parish committees was not followed by any significant changes in the work of those bodies. Supporters of the Commonalty frequently served on the Grand Jury at Quarter

Sessions but the presentments made after 1774 give no indication that the Commonalty used these opportunities to criticise the Corporation or its officers in any pronounced way. Indeed, when the issue of extending the lighting of the town was raised in 1786, the supporters of the Commonalty were as divided on the matter as were the members of the Corporation.<sup>(23)</sup> Despite the adoption of radical ideology by the leaders of the Commonalty in 1775 the ratepayers thus had no serious or developed aims of reforming municipal administration. The struggle was between the 'Ins' and the 'Outs' and was akin to the conflicts in other municipal boroughs in the late 18th century where similar attempts were made to widen the membership of the corporations and/or secure the parliamentary franchise for a larger number of residents.<sup>(24)</sup>

The Corporation of Poole was forced to accept an accommodation with the ratepayers in parish affairs (with the exception of the election of ministers to the church), because the ratepayers were clearly within their rights in serving on parish committees, and their co-operation was in any case needed for the performance of onerous parish duties. The overwhelming majority of the Corporation remained firmly opposed to the Commonalty's claim to the parliamentary franchise however. For the time being, the antagonism created by the demands of the Commonalty and the struggle of the rival interests in the Corporation prevented the admission of any further groups of new burgesses. It was not until 1789 that a group of 24 new members were admitted and this was forced through by one of the two interests in the Corporation in an attempt to secure a majority in the forthcoming parliamentary election.<sup>(25)</sup> In the early 19th century the Corporation adopted a more generous attitude towards admissions - 60 new members were admitted in 1804, 57 in 1818 and 96 in 1830.<sup>(26)</sup>

In the short term, the Commonalty agitation helped provoke the Corporation to become more exclusive in its membership. The continued prosperity of the Newfoundland trade in particular served to increase the number of craftsmen, tradesmen and merchants of the lesser rank with aspirations to join the Corporation. At the same time the merchant elite gained a stronger hold on the trade with Newfoundland<sup>(27)</sup> and were initially inclined to ignore the demands for the widening of the basis of the Corporation. Although the majority of the ratepayers who supported the Commonalty were ultimately dependent on the leading merchants there was therefore some danger of polarisation in society in the town and the continued agitation by the Commonalty showed that the political framework provided by the Corporation was under strain.

However, the accommodation reached with the ratepayers by the Corporation in the 1780s helped to reduce any danger of crisis in municipal affairs. The Corporation was also able to rely on the support of the community in the renewed struggle with the Lord of the Manor which dominated the last two decades of the century, because of the general threat to the town's interests this conflict involved. In the longer term, the Corporation went some way towards meeting the needs of the community. As well as admitting more members to its ranks in the early 19th century, it also achieved measures of reform in its administration. These adjustments helped to delay the coming of bitter controversy over municipal affairs until 1834.

#### The Conflict with the Lord of the Manor 1781-1805

While the Corporation still faced the Commonalty's challenge to its rights and its influence in parish affairs from within the town it was confronted with another attack on its rights from the Lord of the Manor of Canford.

Relations with Canford had been quiet since the late 1740s when Sir Thomas Webb had given up his attempts to enforce his claim to the properties bordering the shores of Poole Harbour. In 1781 however, his son, Sir John Webb, who had been actively improving his estates since he succeeded his father in 1763,<sup>(28)</sup> turned to a scheme which immediately alarmed the Corporation and many of the community. It ushered in a period of bitter disputes between the town and the Lord of the Manor which was only finally brought to a close by the passage of the Canford Magna Enclosure Act of 1805.

Sir John proposed to embank a stretch of the harbour mudland adjacent to Parkstone, in what was then known as Holes Bay. He claimed that the land was his and that its reclamation "would be very beneficial ... to the Town and Neighbourhood of Poole and would not be anyways prejudicial to the Harbour of Poole".<sup>(29)</sup> It is possible that he hoped the Corporation would accept his proposal. During the long period of peaceful co-existence, he had accommodated the Corporation over the widening of the approach to the quays,<sup>(30)</sup> and Benjamin Lester, the Mayor 1781-3, was well-disposed towards him. His approach was hardly tactful however. The petition seeking Parliament's approval for the project was submitted before the Corporation was told of the scheme.<sup>(31)</sup>

The Corporation reacted violently against it. Lester did his best with the members but had to admit that "the Torrent was against me".<sup>(32)</sup> He was forced to sign the Corporation's counter-petition to Parliament, in which they insisted that the mudlands did not belong to Webb and that

the embankment would injure the harbour by silting up its channels.<sup>(33)</sup> Presumably because of this opposition Webb's petition did not re-emerge from the Parliamentary Committee.<sup>(34)</sup>

Driven back on the fundamental question of ownership of the mudlands, Webb subsequently brought ejectment proceedings against some of those Poole men who had reclaimed mudland themselves and afterwards taken Corporation leases for them.<sup>(35)</sup> The Corporation promptly retaliated by ordering the destruction of all the enclosures illegally made on "the commons, heath or waste of or belonging to the Manor of Canford Magna" in the previous 20 years.<sup>(36)</sup> Lester however helped to arrange a hard won compromise proposal in 1785. The Corporation were to accept the project for the embankment on condition that Webb provided a security of £5,000 that the work would be completed within seven years.<sup>(37)</sup> There is every indication that this proposal was never likely to be successful. Feeling in the Corporation against Webb's plans continued to run high and found a leader in John Jeffery, one of Lester's political opponents.<sup>(38)</sup> There is some evidence that Lester and the other burgesses more sympathetic to Webb's scheme never seriously intended to enforce the full agreement. Webb likewise never intended to provide the security which his agent described "as a mere phantom".<sup>(39)</sup>

After further negotiations in which the Corporation sought to improve the bargain by obtaining concessions of mineral rights and sand, gravel and peat on the Canford Common, and the ending of the manorial quit rent,<sup>(40)</sup> the proposed agreement was shelved and by 1787 the Corporation and the Lord of the Manor were once more in a state of deadlock. By this time the Corporation was able to depend on the support of the Parish Vestry, since many of the ratepayers were also personally interested in the question of the ownership of the mudlands and realised the threat to the development of the port if the Corporation's claim to them was defeated. The Parish Vestry thus joined the Corporation in taking action against the recent enclosures on the common and rejecting Webb's demands for rents on the properties he claimed to own.<sup>(41)</sup> In retaliation, Sir John ordered a pump in Thames Street, which he insisted was on his property, to be locked, and brought actions against those inhabitants of the town who had removed sand and gravel from the common.<sup>(42)</sup>

Nevertheless, negotiations between the Corporation and Webb were reopened late in 1787, probably as a result of the recovery of Lester's influence in the Corporation. By this time the original embankment scheme had been given up and negotiations centred on the enclosures, the rights

to sand and gravel, Webb's demand for rents on certain properties in the town, and the vital question of the ownership of the mudlands.<sup>(43)</sup> Discussions broke down when Webb refused to grant a favourable lease on the sand and gravel on the common, but the negotiations would almost certainly have failed in any case when they reached the question of the mudlands.<sup>(44)</sup>

Webb then pursued his claim to the mudlands by starting a test case against a hapless twine-spinner, Lawrence Tulloch, who had a lease from the Corporation for his wharf and windmill on a section of reclaimed land.<sup>(45)</sup> Webb's success at the Dorchester assizes in July 1792<sup>(46)</sup> caused consternation in the Corporation and the town in general for it meant that "a great part of the public quays, and other very considerable embankments and buildings, that have been made on the mudlands within the last 30 years are determined to be the property of Sir John".<sup>(47)</sup> Webb wasted no time in following up his victory and in August, his steward was pressing the Corporation for the payment of rent on the quays, the Fish Shambles, a shipyard and other properties now established as belonging to the Manor. At the same time numerous people of rank in the town, such as the Lesters, Spurriers and Westons, as well as many others of humbler status, faced demands for rents on premises they had obtained on land reclaimed from the mudlands. A potentially more sinister threat to the port lay in Webb's plan to alter the course of the Lytchett River and bring it out into the harbour above Poole.<sup>(48)</sup>

The Corporation refused to settle with the Lord of the Manor, clearly hoping that the opinion of "some omniscient Counsel"<sup>(49)</sup> whom they decided to consult, would enable them to fight a guerilla war of resistance to Webb's claims and, if possible, mount a counter-attack on the issue of the enclosures of Canford Common, where Sir John could be accused of infringing manorial charters.<sup>(50)</sup>

The issue was never joined however since the Corporation was still following the tactics of delay when Webb died in 1797. His steward then became the trustee of Webb's estate because Sir John had no male heirs.<sup>(51)</sup> He apparently abandoned the law suits pending and by 1804 began negotiations over an Enclosure Bill with the Corporation and freeholders of Poole.<sup>(52)</sup> These proceeded reasonably amicably. By the Act of 1805 the Corporation and freeholders were awarded satisfactory allotments of waste and mudlands in compensation for the loss of common rights and the manorial quit rent was ended.<sup>(53)</sup> At long last the Corporation and inhabitants of the town had no need to fear that the Lord of the Manor would threaten the

harbour or strangle the town's development by checking its growth inland.

The comparatively rapid and amicable settlement by the Enclosure Act of issues which had cost so much time and expense raises the question of the Corporation's conduct over the problems. The hostility of Nottingham Corporation to enclosure demonstrates how easy it was for an oligarchic body to oppose improvements for purely selfish reasons.<sup>(54)</sup> Poole Corporation's determined resistance to the original embankment project included elements of blind prejudice and it was only with reluctance that a majority accepted the verdict of a consultant engineer that this scheme would not injure the harbour. However, in view of their traditionally sensitive attitude to any alterations in the harbour which might affect its utility, Webb's assertion of exclusive rights over the mudlands and the long history of ill feeling and disputes between the Corporation and the Lord of the Manor, this attitude is understandable.

Quite apart from his family's record of pronounced Roman Catholic and Jacobite loyalties, Sir John Webb himself had a bad reputation for cunning and double-dealing in the town. His inhuman treatment of his business associate, James Stephen, whom he contrived to reduce to a debtor's prison in 1770, to free himself from an embarrassing commitment,<sup>(55)</sup> was presumably common knowledge in Poole. The Corporation's description of him as "a scheming man and very opulent"<sup>(56)</sup> was doubtless prompted in part by the knowledge that he, like his predecessors, maintained a Jesuit chaplain at Canford.<sup>(57)</sup>

It is true that Lester, an intelligent and enterprising man, appears to have sincerely believed that the embankment project would not harm the harbour and did his best to find an accommodation with Webb. His motives in doing so are suspect however. He was accused of bias by some of the Corporation, probably with some justification, because he was anxious to please Webb and smooth his way to obtaining leases for two of his houses in Poole.<sup>(58)</sup> He also hoped to secure the post of steward at Canford for his son-in-law.<sup>(59)</sup>

If allowances are made for the prejudice of many of the Corporation against the Lord of the Manor, and for the hostility of some of them towards Lester, the Corporation's behaviour over the issue may be regarded as responsible. They sought to protect the vital interests of the town, represented by the harbour and the need to have room and building materials for the expansion of the town to the north of the narrow peninsula on which it was situated. The Newfoundland merchants amongst the

Corporation had a special regard too for the opportunities to develop farms in this area to supply the needs of their trade. As Britain became more dependent on imported corn and American supplies of food-stuffs to Newfoundland were interrupted by the American War and its aftermath, this became of even greater importance to them.<sup>(60)</sup>

Because of the long history of bad feeling with the Lord of the Manor, Sir John's reputation and the vulnerability of the Corporation's claim to the mudlands it is understandable that the Corporation did not take a stronger initiative in proposing a general enclosure.<sup>(61)</sup> Its leaders had therefore been largely content to leave the fundamental question alone and instead allow the growth of piecemeal enclosure, which was extending settlement into the commons and quays and warehouses over the reclaimed mudlands. Moreover, while it is true some members of the Corporation had personal interests in the disputes with Webb, many of those outside the Corporation also had such interests and the Corporation recognised the existence of this common interest. This enabled the two bodies to co-operate in the struggle against the Lord of the Manor.

The Corporation's reaction to the proposal for general enclosure in 1804 was equally responsible, and business-like. There was a brief period of disagreement between the Corporation and the inhabitants and freeholders over the manner of the negotiations on the terms of the bill.<sup>(62)</sup> This was resolved when the Parish Vestry agreed to a Corporation proposal that the interests of the Corporation and the freeholders should be represented by separate committees, who should co-operate for "ascertaining and settling as well the general interest as the distinct interest of the Corporation", (in the harbour mudlands).<sup>(63)</sup> The two committees evidently worked harmoniously on the detailed provisions of the bill and the allotments finally made closely resembled the proposals originally agreed by the Corporation and the Vestry at the beginning of the negotiations.<sup>(64)</sup> Once the awards had been made the Corporation continued to show a business-like attitude in exploiting the land now available for its use.<sup>(65)</sup>

The struggle with the Lord of the Manor and its resolution in this way was not only of great importance for the future physical development of the town. It demonstrated that the oligarchy controlling the Corporation retained some sense of public responsibility and it provided an opportunity for a further rapprochement to take place between the Corporation and the ratepayers. While the Corporation as a whole had no intention of giving up its privileged position, and the merchant elite had no



thought of surrendering their power within the Corporation, the conflict with Webb may well have given the Corporation more confidence in the rate-payers and made them willing to be more generous in the admissions to the Corporation made in 1804. Leading merchants and their friends and relatives made up the bulk of the 62 admissions made then but 6 of those enfranchised can be identified as men without any strong connection with existing members of the Corporation.<sup>(66)</sup> The resolution of the dispute with Canford also contributed to the willingness of the Corporation to undertake reform in its administration in the early 19th century. The town's rights over the land adjoining it and the harbour, so long in doubt, had at last been settled. In this sense, the future of the community had been reassured. The Corporation gained confidence from this to make changes in its methods. At the same time, it needed to be more business-like in the way it handled its affairs because its responsibilities had increased with the addition of the enclosure award to its properties.

#### Reform in the Corporation 1805-1830

The method and awareness shown by the Corporation in its handling of the enclosure was one aspect of a significant improvement in its administration in the early 19th century. One important feature of the background to these reforms was the collapse of the town's staple trade with Newfoundland after 1815.

In the early 19th century the Corporation became a much more active body than it had been before. Between 1803 and 1815, in only one year, 1809, did the Corporation meet on fewer than eight occasions and between 1815 and 1830 it normally held at least twelve meetings each year.<sup>(67)</sup> Much more frequent use was made of ad hoc committees -five were appointed between 1807 and 1813<sup>(68)</sup> and after 1815 such committees were set up as a regular practice.<sup>(69)</sup> On some occasions care was taken to avoid the accusation that too much power was being entrusted to too few of the members selected for these committees and it was ordered that they should be open committees.<sup>(70)</sup> The reports of some of these committees, such as that established to survey the Corporation allotments in Parkstone and Kinson in 1828,<sup>(71)</sup> were very thorough and indicate the workmanlike manner in which some of the burgesses carried out their duties.

Improvements were also made in the Corporation's administrative support. Office accommodation was acquired for the Quay and Ballast Masters in 1805 and 1812, and from 1813 a Deputy Clerk of the Markets was employed to assist the Mayor in the administration of the markets.<sup>(72)</sup> The Corporation began to take a more responsible attitude towards its finances. In

1816 it was ordered that abstracts of the Mayor's accounts should be printed and sent to each member of the Corporation.<sup>(73)</sup> Stricter controls were exercised over the leases and rents of Corporation property, especially in the 1820s.<sup>(74)</sup> The thorough revision of the bye-laws made in 1814 and 1819 also indicated the Corporation's more methodical attitude to its responsibilities.<sup>(75)</sup>

As was to be expected, the Corporation's concern for more business-like administration was directed primarily to the management of the harbour and its facilities. In 1819, the retirement of the Treasurer of the Quays provided the opportunity for the Corporation to review the management of the Harbour Dues. It was decided that the full Corporation should audit these accounts annually.<sup>(76)</sup> Although no audit was carried out until 1822, and a further hiatus occurred between 1823 and 1827, by 1827 the Corporation was treating the Harbour Dues more systematically. Regular annual audits were held until the dissolution of the Corporation and careful consideration given to the investment of the surpluses obtained.<sup>(77)</sup> In 1823 a dispute with a ship's master who had attempted to avoid paying the dues resulted in the adoption of "Rules and Regulations to be observed by all Masters and Commanders of Vessels trading to and from the Port of Poole, and also by Pilots and others."<sup>(78)</sup> Twelve very precise regulations were laid down to ensure the payment of dues and the convenience and safety of the quays. These presumably replaced unwritten rules which had been enforced since before the passage of the 1756 Act.

The Corporation also secured improvements to the quays. Extensions to them were made in 1805 and 1807.<sup>(79)</sup> More minor extensions were built in 1821 and 1825 as a result of exchanges or purchases of land with or from individual merchants who had built private wharves.<sup>(80)</sup> Another large extension was made in 1828, where a new Fish Market was built in 1830.<sup>(81)</sup> After a fire had destroyed the Customs House in 1813 the opportunity was taken to improve access to the quays<sup>(82)</sup> and on one occasion there was an example of forward planning when the Corporation decided to buy a piece of land near the quays "which is to be left open and not built upon for the use and advantage of the town".<sup>(83)</sup> In view of the considerable extensions to the quays which had taken place since the 1760s there was some justice in the Salisbury Journal's boast in 1820 that "the Quays are very extensive and as commodious as any in England".<sup>(84)</sup>

However, the Corporation was unable to provide anything but minor remedies for the danger that the harbour would be damaged by the silting up of its channels. It had commissioned a survey of the harbour by an engineer in 1827 who recommended large scale works which were beyond the resources of the Corporation. The Quay Committee recommended an approach to government for assistance but this was not pursued.<sup>(85)</sup> Suspicions of the town's Whig members of Parliament on the part of the Tory burgesses at a time when the shortcomings of unreformed corporations had been re-emphasised, and more general disquiet with the state of national government in 1827 after the deaths of Liverpool and Canning may well have deterred the Corporation from seeking government aid.<sup>(86)</sup>

One other function which the Corporation pursued most vigorously in these years was the development of the roads. By 1821 alterations to the approach to the town made it possible to separate commercial and passenger traffic into the town.<sup>(87)</sup> Afterwards a number of minor road improvements were made in 1824-5, 1827 and 1830-1.<sup>(88)</sup> In 1833-4 a third route into the town was widened and straightened and by 1835 work had started on the macadamizing of some of the town's roads.<sup>(89)</sup> The Corporation was also particularly active in rebuilding and extending the town's markets. The Butter and Green markets were enclosed and covered as a result of the work of the Market Committee appointed in 1820.<sup>(90)</sup> In 1827 completely new markets were provided for these commodities, and a further market was bought in 1831.<sup>(91)</sup>

In making improvements to the port facilities, roads and markets the Corporation was naturally prompted in part by the economic interests of the merchants who continued to dominate it, and the opportunities to increase the Corporation's revenue. In other municipal functions more remote from the business interests of the controlling oligarchy there was sometimes less effort, but some improvement can be seen nevertheless. The bye-laws adopted in 1814 included a ban on the "deposit of dung, dirt, soil or compost on any Streets, Lanes, Quays or other public places" except at the times specified by the Scavengers.<sup>(92)</sup> The continuing frequent complaints in the Quarter Sessions Presentments show that the task of keeping the streets clean was beyond the capabilities of the Scavenger.<sup>(93)</sup> However, the Quarter Sessions Presentments of the 1820s in particular reveal two significant features. The Grand Juries were expecting more attention to public nuisances than before. For example, in January and May 1829 an unprecedented total of 88 presentments were made, mainly of obstructions to pavements.<sup>(94)</sup> The Magistrates were also

more careful in responding to the presentments, even when they were directed against the Mayor, other Corporation officers or the Magistrates themselves.<sup>(95)</sup> The comments appended to the presentments also indicate that remedies ordered by the Magistrates were now being acted upon more frequently.

The minutes of the Parish Vestry show that the co-operation between the Corporation and the ratepayers, which had commenced in the 1780s and had assisted in the implementation of the Canford Enclosure Act, continued afterwards. It was especially noticeable in the management of the poor.<sup>(96)</sup> In 1813 the Parish began to use Gilbert's Act to administer the Poor Law. This combined elements of economy and humanity.<sup>(97)</sup> The Assistant Commissioner of the 1832 inquiry who visited Poole declared that he had "selected the town of Poole as an instance of the best management of the poor I have met with".<sup>(98)</sup> He emphasised that this was due to the harmony which existed between the Magistrates, the Vestry and the Parish Officers.

The Corporation also achieved some reform which was of a 'constitutional' nature. It was less impressive than the administrative reforms but nevertheless of significance. One clear advance was the ending of the bye-law which had limited the rights of the ordinary members of the Corporation and increased the power of the Aldermen in the mayoral elections. In September 1809 33 of the burgesses signed a protest against the bye-law and as a result of the quo warranto proceedings taken against the Mayor then elected, John Strong, the bye-law was quashed in 1810.<sup>(99)</sup> In part this reform came about because it suited the purpose of George Garland, who was seeking to complete the repair of his interest in the Corporation which had been defeated in the general election of 1807 by the rival interest headed by John Jeffery. Garland's son had triumphed in a by-election in Poole early in 1809<sup>(100)</sup> but Garland was determined to press home his success by overthrowing Strong, an ally of Jeffery who had already served as mayor in 1805-6 and 1808. In attacking the nomination bye-law, Garland was doing what Jeffery himself had threatened to do in 1791 when, intent on overthrowing the hold of Lester and Garland on the mayoralty, he had declared that "he would spend £9,000 to break through the oppressive nomination".<sup>(101)</sup>

However, this reform represented far more than the manoeuvring of a political interest. Although Garland stopped short of countenancing the total reconstitution of the Corporation, he and his interest were affected by the revival of radical hopes and activity after the Westminster election of 1807.<sup>(102)</sup> Garland himself had never taken a reactionary view of the French Revolution and realised that moderate parliamentary reform and other reform was ultimately necessary. In 1798

he had written to William Augustus Miles that "Reformation must take place at the end of the present war but I have no idea that it is to be effected without an alteration in the representation or shortening the duration of Parliament ... I fear real economy or reformation is not to be expected from a Parliament over which the people have so seldom any, and then so little, control ... once peace comes the legislators will have to act more in accord with the ideas of the body at large".<sup>(103)</sup>

His son supported Wardle's attack on the Duke of York with the approval of the radicals amongst the townspeople in Poole and took up other reform issues in Parliament.<sup>(104)</sup> The Garland interest introduced a request for parliamentary reform in the Corporation's address to the Prince Regent in February 1811.<sup>(105)</sup> This initiative was not pursued however, initially because of the particular problems faced by the Garland interest in the election of 1812. Subsequently, although Garland's son continued to support reform as an M.P. his father took a more conservative attitude in national politics.<sup>(106)</sup> His interest still supported reform in the methods of the Corporation but did not raise the question of parliamentary reform in the Corporation until the coming of the reform crisis in 1830.

The Corporation continued to be dominated by the merchant oligarchy during this period but became a more representative body. The admission of 60 new burgesses in 1804 and 57 in 1818, although much more generous than those made in the late 18th century, did not destroy the power of the merchant elite. Analysis of the occupations of 48 of the men admitted in 1818 shows that 36 of them were merchants, or individuals whose occupations such as shipbuilding or coopering made them largely dependent on the patronage of the most prominent merchants. However, as in 1804, a few of those admitted were not apparently members of, or closely connected with, 'Corporation' families, and 13 of the 57 new members were Dissenters.<sup>(107)</sup> The admission of such a comparatively large number of Dissenters represented a return to the practice of the earlier 18th century when it had been usual to choose approximately one quarter of the new burgesses from Dissenters. The admissions of 1818 included men from a wider range of occupations than before. They included four coal merchants, a surgeon, a watchmaker and an attorney.

There were other signs that the Corporation was becoming more concerned over its membership, and more sensitive to criticism that it was too narrow a body. In 1819 it began to check the rights of non-resident members.<sup>(108)</sup> Despite the making of numerous bye-laws defining their rights to take part in Corporation business, their position had never been clearly resolved.<sup>(109)</sup> By the early 19th century the growth of two suburbs

north of the old town meant that some of the formerly resident members of the Corporation were no longer strictly residents of the town because they had moved into these suburbs. In 1825 the Corporation accepted a committee's recommendation that a new definition of residence should be applied.<sup>(110)</sup> This was a stricter definition and in effect restricted the rights of non-resident members of the Corporation. Earlier, in 1813, a minor step towards rationalising the membership of the Corporation was taken when the Mayor lost his privilege to create one new burgess during his year of office.<sup>(111)</sup>

It was however the changes resulting from the admission of 96 burgesses in 1830 that had the most radical effect on the composition of the Corporation. These men were admitted during the excitement over the prospects of parliamentary reform and in enfranchising them the Corporation was acknowledging the pressure from the revived Commonalty agitation.<sup>(112)</sup> In Poole, as elsewhere, agitation for parliamentary reform resulted in a challenge to the established political leadership of the community.<sup>(113)</sup>

In contrast to earlier practice, when each batch of new members had included a proportion of non-resident members, all of those admitted in 1830 were residents of the town. Only 34 of the 58 new members whose occupational backgrounds have been established may be said to have belonged to the mercantile interest. For the first time since before the 18th century the Corporation admitted a whole group of men who followed much humbler occupations - 5 drapers, 3 grocers, 2 bakers, 2 shoemakers and a currier. The Corporation was also more generous towards the Dissenters for in 1830 it is likely that as many as 17 were enfranchised, of whom 5 belonged to the group of humbler individuals identified above. Significantly too, the men admitted in 1830 included more representatives of the professions than before. Amongst them were: 6 attorneys, an attorney's clerk, 2 surgeons and a schoolmaster.<sup>(114)</sup>

Some qualification has to be made to the representative nature of these admissions. At least two of the leading advocates of parliamentary reform in the town were not admitted and 29 of those enfranchised were the sons of existing burgesses who as minors would not immediately become effective members of the Corporation. Since probably half of the town's population were Dissenters they failed to receive a proportionate share of the new members, even allowing for the number of Dissenters who belonged to the lower ranks of society. The overall result of these admissions was that the merchant interest kept a bare majority which it could hope to replenish from the minors as they came of age.

Nevertheless, the admissions of 1830 were significant. During the last five years of its existence the Corporation was more diversified and representative of the town's population than it had ever been before. Together with the administrative reforms, the changes in the composition of the Corporation represent an important measure of self-improvement by the Corporation. The 'constitutional' reforms did not go as far as those introduced in early 19th century Plymouth<sup>(115)</sup> but they were significant and the state of municipal government in Poole at this time compares very favourably with that in numerous towns where the corporations remained totally unrepresentative or otherwise proved unable to move with the times. In Southampton, for example, the Corporation's attempts at administrative reform in the 1820s largely failed because of its inability to use sufficiently business-like methods.<sup>(116)</sup> Mainly because they were such unrepresentative bodies, the Corporations of Leeds and Leicester were unable to achieve the administrative improvements they sought.<sup>(117)</sup> Bristol Corporation remained "a slothful, incompetent unit of local government because it never believed its primary purpose was to fulfil the public needs",<sup>(118)</sup> and was even unwilling to take action to remedy the serious decline in the port's trade in the early 19th century.<sup>(119)</sup>

Poole Corporation was in a better position to undertake successful reform than some of the corporations where reform was either attempted unsuccessfully or not attempted at all. Its status and view of its responsibilities had not suffered from the creation of specialised statutory bodies as had happened in Bristol and Southampton.<sup>(120)</sup> It was not confronted by the rise of a new and hostile economic interest as were the Corporations of Leeds and Leicester.<sup>(121)</sup> Why was it willing to make use of its comparatively advantageous position to undertake reform?

Initially, the Corporation gained confidence to undertake reforms because of the resolution of the conflict with the Lord of the Manor. The Enclosure Act also gave it a particular reason for reviewing its methods of business because it resulted in a significant increase in the property owned by the Corporation.<sup>(122)</sup>

To an extent the Corporation was also responding to the needs for change which society was coming to expect in government in the early 19th century. It recognised, at least partially, "that what was politically, socially, intellectually and spiritually a new society was growing up in England for which neither the institutions, nor the ideas, that had been inherited from the eighteenth century would suffice".<sup>(123)</sup> Even the more oligarchical corporations of Leeds and Leicester felt some impulse to make changes in their methods. The merchant oligarchy in Poole was understand-

ably unwilling to surrender its privileged position but realised the need to show more clearly that it had a sense of public responsibility. The attention it paid to administrative improvements, including its property and finances, reflected this concern to satisfy the demand for "greater common sense in government".<sup>(124)</sup> The energy it showed in developing roads and markets was not simply the result of mercantile self-interest or the need to improve the Corporation's revenue. It also represented an attempt to meet the needs of the increasing population of the town, which reached 5,820 in 1811 and 8,216 in 1831.<sup>(125)</sup> War-time conditions, during the years when Poole was used as a base for the militia, exacerbated the social problems caused by the surge in population in the early 19th century.<sup>(126)</sup> and forced the Corporation to seek remedies.

The Corporation's willingness to move with the times was also encouraged by the comparatively weak state of radicalism in the town in the early 19th century. The aims of the Commonalty had been taken up by the Poole branch of the Friends of the People<sup>(127)</sup> but after its apparent demise shortly after 1793 there was no formal or continuous organisation amongst the supporters of parliamentary reform and other radical causes. The term 'Commonalty' was used to describe the holders of such views but the Commonalty had no permanent organisation. It reappeared briefly as a pressure group for parliamentary reform in 1825 and 1827<sup>(128)</sup> but it was not until the reform agitation of 1830 that it engaged in any significant activity. One major reason for its weakness was that many of its erst-while or potential supporters had been admitted to the Corporation in the admissions made in 1804 and 1818.<sup>(129)</sup> Another was the existence of the Garland interest as one of the two major interests in the Corporation. This represented the support in the Corporation for Benjamin Lester, M.P., whose independent Whig views meant that he was a consistent supporter of reform after 1813. The Garland interest refrained from expressing radical political views in the Corporation after its declaration for parliamentary reform in 1811 but it acted as a point of contact between the Corporation and the radicalism of those outside the Corporation. Since industrial development in the town was limited, and some of the middle class had obtained the franchise by admission to the Corporation, the radicals in Poole could not hope to secure the widespread support for parliamentary reform which emerged in 1816-7 in larger industrial towns.<sup>(130)</sup> The Garland interest was therefore able to act as a moderating influence on the radical minority in the community and assist in reassuring the Tory members of the Corporation that reform in the Corporation was not politically dangerous. In September 1830, when the Commonalty came alive



again, the Garland interest helped to secure the further widening of the Corporation's membership. Both the major interests in the Corporation contributed to its reform but the Garland interest, which held the mayoralty between 1810 and 1817, in 1819, 1824 and 1827-30, played the more important part by helping to make reform 'respectable'. In the absence of a stronger anti-Corporation interest group in the town, such as existed in other boroughs,<sup>(131)</sup> the Corporation was disposed to go further in undertaking reform.

There was one further important local reason for the willingness of the Corporation to undertake its own reform in the early 19th century. This was the collapse of the Newfoundland trade in 1814-5.<sup>(132)</sup> The revival it experienced in the 1820s did not outlast the decade.<sup>(133)</sup> Hopes of developing an alternative staple trade with South America ultimately came to very little.<sup>(134)</sup> While the record of bankruptcies shows that the Newfoundland merchants were initially able to stave off complete ruin, there were numerous casualties amongst those who were dependent on supplying their needs, such as timber merchants, twine and iron manufacturers and wine and spirit dealers.<sup>(135)</sup> The slump in the town's economy had a direct effect on the Corporation. While in previous years the Corporation had little trouble in finding men to serve in its offices, in the 1820s there were frequent difficulties in filling these posts because of the additional burdens they represented in such hard times. In 1820, William Jolliffe made an ingenious use of the Test and Corporation Acts by successfully pleading that he could not undertake the duties of the shrievalty because he had not qualified himself by taking the Sacraments as prescribed by the Acts.<sup>(136)</sup> In 1826 several candidates declined to become Mayor. One was elected but still refused the office. Finally it was entrusted to G.W. Ledgard who "accepted it with reluctance, having served recently for three years".<sup>(137)</sup> The problem evidently continued because in May 1830 the Corporation enacted a by-law requiring that new burgesses should promise to accept any office to which they were subsequently elected.<sup>(138)</sup> The problem of finding candidates for offices was made worse by the growth of the suburbs to the north of the town which lay outside the municipal boundaries. They attracted some of the wealthier members of the community who could avoid office in the Corporation because they were non-resident burgesses.

In these circumstances it is understandable that the Corporation was more willing to increase its membership in 1830 so that the burden of office might be shared more equitably. The decline of the Newfoundland trade also meant that the Corporation was more ready to widen the occupational basis of the body by introducing other merchants, professional men

and those of humbler status. The attention it paid to limiting the rights of non-resident burgesses at this time also stemmed in part from the problem it faced in filling offices.

The drastic change in the town's economic fortunes was also responsible to an extent for the Corporation's concern with the port facilities, roads, markets and its own revenues. If alternative trades were to be attracted to the port it was essential that proper provision was made for them. The trade it was hoped to develop with South America, and the growing clay exports, would need the port facilities.<sup>(139)</sup> Improvements in roads and markets would assist the coasting trade, one of the other trades it was hoped to increase.<sup>(140)</sup>

In addition, the economic depression made it necessary for the Corporation to exercise even greater care over its resources. By 1820 its income from rents had declined and later in this decade it became difficult to dispose of leases of Corporation property.<sup>(141)</sup> The harbour dues produced an average surplus of approximately £600 between 1827 and 1831<sup>(142)</sup> but this income was certain to have been affected as well by the decay of trade. The Corporation's concern with the management of its property and other sources of income was clearly in part a response to the economic problems facing the town.

Reform in the Corporation was thus the result of a blend of strong pragmatic reasoning and a realisation of the more general requirement to meet the change in the needs and aspirations of society. Professor Matthews has likened the Newfoundland merchants of Poole to dinosaurs because of their conservative attitude to the Newfoundland trade in the early 19th century.<sup>(143)</sup> They showed a greater willingness to move with the times in their administration of Poole.

1. D.C.R.O., P. 227/CW.2, St. James Parish Vestry Minutes, 1769-1803, 18th April, 1775.
2. Ibid, 9th April, 1776.
3. Ibid, 1st April, 1777.
4. Ibid, 21st April, 1778, 6th April, 1779, 28th March, 1780, 17th April, 1781.
5. Ibid, 22nd April, 1783, 13th April, 1784, 29th March, 1785, et seq., 1st April, 1800, 7th April, 1801, 20th April, 1802. Three leading ratepayers were elected to a Rate Committee on 11th September, 1792. Two of these men also served on a Poor Law Committee established on 6th January, 1801. Benjamin Lester collaborated with George Kemp, the Deacon of the Congregational Church, and a supporter of the Commonalty, over the choice of a Churchwarden in 1788. (D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 9, Benjamin Lester's Diary, 21st March, 1788).
6. P.B.A., Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 1779-1813, 29th December, 1788; Uncalendared MSS., Attorney General v. Corporation of Poole at the relation of W. Gaden and others, 1789-1792; Lester's Diary, op. cit., 25-27th February, 29th December, 1788, 26th February, 1790.
7. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 4th May, 1791; J. Sydenham, The History of the Town and County of Poole, pp. 296-7.
8. Bundock later became a general merchant and, despite his radical views, part owner of a privateer in the American War. He went bankrupt in 1782. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 6, Isaac Lester's Diary, 26th September, 7th December, 1775, 5th June, 12th December, 1776, 10th February, 1777, 11th October, 1778; Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 1st July, 1771, 18th April, 1775, 9th April, 1776; S.J., 16th October, 1780, 25th March, 1782.
9. All of the men listed here signed a letter to Christopher Wyvill, in support of parliamentary reform. Wyvill Papers, Vol.II, Paper XIII, p. 99, 2nd December, 1782.
10. Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 21st April, 1772, 13th April, 1773.
11. D.C.R.O., N.3, TR.1, Unitarian Church, Indenture, 16th August, 1780.
12. Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 9th April, 1776.
13. Transcript of Congregational Church Burial Register made by H.F.V. Johnstone of Poole, 9th December, 1802.
14. Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 21st April, 1772, 13th April, 1773.
15. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 19-20th June, 1770, 5th January, 1774.

16. S.J., 17th August, 1761.
17. Chapter Two, pp. 34-5.
18. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 10th September, 1766.
19. Ibid, 8th November, 1775.
20. Ibid, 11th, 27th November, 1st, 2nd, 5th-7th December, 1775; P.B.A., Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 1739-1779, 7th December, 1775.
21. S.J., 10th April, 1775.
22. P.B.A., Lamp and Watch Book, 1757-1786.
23. Benjamin Lester's Diary, op. cit., 7th December, 1786.
24. In Liverpool those merchants and gentlemen who were excluded from real power in the Corporation by the Common Council became "an anti-corporation interest group" and were willing to combine with the radicals in the 1790s to defeat the Common Council. (F.E. Sanderson, 'The Structure of Politics in Liverpool 1780-1807', Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, Vol.CXXVII, (1978), pp. 65-89). A similar conflict took place in Ipswich in the general election of 1784. (P. Kelly, 'Radicalism and Public Opinion in the General Election of 1784', B.I.H.R., Vol.XLV, (1972), pp. 73-88).
25. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 5th, 9-11th May, 1789.
26. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 25th August, 1804, 3rd June, 1818, 16th September, 1830.
27. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fisheries (mainly in the 17th and 18th centuries)', Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1968, p. 482.
28. Merle M. Bevington, ed., The Memoirs of James Stephen, p. 74 ff.
29. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 12th February, 1781.
30. Ibid, 17th July, 1780.
31. D.C.R.O., D. 365, X.3, Benjamin Lester's Letter Book, Lester to Joseph Gulston, 15th February, 1781; Commons Journals, XXXVIII, 6th February, 1781.
32. Lester to Gulston, 15th February, 1781, op. cit.
33. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 12th February, 1781.
34. Commons Journals, XXXVIII, 6th February, 1781. (The index notes that the petition was "not reported").
35. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 25th June, 1783.
36. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 25th June, 1783.
37. Ibid, 17th November, 1783, 14th January, 1784, 27th April, 9th May, 1785; Lester's Diary, op. cit., 17th, 27th November, 1st, 5th, 17th December, 1783, 23rd September, 3rd December, 1784, 23rd February, 21st, 26-27th April, 1785.

38. Ibid, 4th February, 2nd March, 1785.
39. D.C.R.O. 9413-4, L. Talbot to Edward Arrowsmith, 12th-28th, 30-31st August, 1785.
40. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 30th April, 1785.
41. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 24th May, 4th July, 1787; Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 11th September, 1787.
42. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 3rd, 23rd August, 22nd October, 1787. (The Corporation had the pump unlocked).
43. P.B.A., S. 1757, Proposals from the Agent of Sir John Webb respecting a compromise in the Law Suit now depending between him and the Corporation, 11th August, 1788.
44. P.B.A., S. 1757, Sir John Webb to George Garland, Mayor of Poole, 14th November, 1788; Garland to Webb, 20th November, 1788; Webb to Garland, 23rd November, 1788; Garland to Webb, 26th November, 1788; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 1st March, 11th August, 18th, 25th November, 1788.
45. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 17th June, 1791, 23rd January, 1792; P.B.A. uncalendared MSS., Sir John Webb v. the Mayor, Bailiffs, Burgesses and Commonalty of Poole and Lawrence Tulloch, 1791-2; D.C.R.O., 9432, Edward Arrowsmith to Lawrence Tulloch, 1st March, 1st April, 1793.
46. D.C.R.O., 9440, Mr. Justice Buller's charge to the Special Jury at Dorchester Assizes, 28th July, 1792.
47. S.J., 6th August, 1792.
48. D.C.R.O., 9440, John Foot (Town Clerk) to Edward Arrowsmith, 31st August, 1792; Arrowsmith to Foot, 31st October, 21st December, 1792; D.C.R.O., 9427, Notes on Poole Rents, 2nd February, 1794.
49. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 30th August, 1792.
50. P.B.A., Uncalendared and undated MS., Case for the Opinion of Mr. Serjeant Lawrence in respect to Sir John Webb's claims, attributed to 1792.
51. D.C.R.O., 9452, Edward Arrowsmith: Correspondence relating to Sir John Webb's affairs, 1797-1800. (Webb left his Dorset estates in trust for his daughter, the wife of the 5th Earl of Shaftesbury, and granddaughter, Lady Barbara Ashley, who married the Hon. W.F.S. Ponsonby, in 1814. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 58-9).
52. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 2nd October, 4th, 12th December, 1804; Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 25th September, 11th December, 1804, 13th, 15th February, 1805.

53. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 65-7.
54. Malcolm I. Thomis, Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835, pp. 122-6.
55. Bevington, op. cit., pp. 80-4; S.J., 28th December, 1761.
56. MS. Brief for the Defendants, Sir John Webb v. the Mayor etc. of Poole and Lawrence Tulloch, op. cit.
57. Hants and Dorset Registers, Catholic Record Society, Vol.XLIII, (1949), pp. 84, 123.
58. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 3rd, 5th January, 1784, 24th September, 1787.
59. Ibid, 5th November, 1784; Lester's Letter Book, op. cit., Lester to Webb, 5th November, 1784.
60. Isaac Lester's Diary, op. cit., 1st, 3rd September, 1773; Matthews, op. cit., pp. 456 ff., 506-13.
61. William Spurrier, the Mayor, proposed a general enclosure of the common to Webb in 1787 but this was apparently the first time the proposal had been made and it was not couched in very forceful terms. P.B.A., S. 1757, Spurrier to Webb, August, 1787.
62. Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 25th September, 11th December, 1804; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 4th December, 1804.
63. Ibid, 12th December, 1804.
64. Vestry Minutes, op. cit., 15th January, 13th February, 1805; Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 65-6.
65. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 4th October, 6th November, 1811, 4th March, 6th May, 22nd July, 7th October, 18th November, 1812, 5th May, 2nd June, 1813.
66. These men were George Aldridge, a Congregationalist corn-factor, Thomas and William Adey, brewers, James Ferris, a watch maker, George Hancock, a store-keeper, and William Stainsmore, a ship-builder.
67. See Appendix B, Meetings of the Corporation recorded between 1740 and 1835.
68. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 4th March, 1807, 2nd January, 4th October, 1811, 6th May, 4th November, 1812.
69. The appointment of 40 committees for the period 1815-30 has been traced in the Corporation Monthly Meeting Book. They dealt with land transactions, the rights of the Corporation and the improvement of port facilities, roads and markets.
70. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 1813-1835, 7th March, 1827, 4th August, 1830.

71. Ibid, 6th February, 1828, 7th January, 4th February, 1829.
72. Ibid, 6th November, 4th December, 1805, 18th November, 1812, 3rd November, 1813.
73. Ibid, 1st May, 1816.
74. Ibid, 5th May, 1824. The Corporation then resolved that all leases of its property were to be strictly enforced. This was done. See for example, Ibid, 1st September, 1824, 2nd May, 7th November, 1827.
75. Ibid, 2nd September, 1814, 3rd May, 1819.
76. Ibid, 3rd November, 1819.
77. Ibid, 25th June, 1822, 1st July, 1823, 7th March, 7th November, 1827, 1st July, 1828, 30th June, 1829, 29th June, 1830, 29th June, 1831, 4th July, 1832, 25th June, 1833, 1st July, 1834, 30th June, 1835.
78. Ibid, 1st July, 3rd September, 1823.
79. Ibid, 23rd July, 1805, 1st July, 1807.
80. Ibid, 1st August, 1821, 5th June, 1822, 1st January, 1823, 3rd March, 4th August, 1824, 2nd February, 1825.
81. Ibid, 6th August, 1828, 5th August, 1829, 5th May, 1st September, 1830; S.J., 13th October, 1828.
82. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 10th May, 2nd, 8th June, 1813.
83. Ibid, 7th June, 1809.
84. S.J., 23rd October, 1820.
85. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 7th March, 4th April, 11th May, 4th July, 1827, 6th July, 1831.
86. Michael Brock, The Great Reform Act, (1973), pp. 47-9.
87. S.J., 12th March, 1821.
88. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 5th October, 3rd November, 1824, 5th January, 7th December, 1825, 4th July, 1827, 2nd November, 1830, 5th January, 2nd February, 7th September, 5th October, 1831.
89. Ibid, 16th September, 1833; Dorset County Chronicle, 22nd May, 1834, 13th August, 1835.
90. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 6th September, 4th October, 1820, 6th June, 1821; S.J., 2nd April, 1821.
91. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 7th March, 2nd May, 5th September, 1827, 6th April, 4th May, 1831.
92. Ibid, 2nd September, 1814.
93. See for example, Quarter Sessions Presentment 21st April, 1820: Deborah Knowles for emptying night soil in Paddick's Lane; Knight and others for not emptying their privy in Bowling Green Alley, 26th October, 1827; Maria Wiffin for a dung heap in Hill Street; ...

93. cont.  
... George Kemp for not cleaning a ditch in Fish Lane adjoining his garden.
94. P.B.A., Quarter Sessions Presentments, 23-24th January, 8th May, 1829.
95. See for example, Quarter Sessions Presentments, 21st April 1820: The Mayor presented for the structural state of the Salisbury Prison - Justices' comment, "The Mayor to report at the next session"; Quarter Sessions Presentments, 7th May, 1824: the Mayor and Magistrates presented for the lack of ventilation in the Salisbury Prison - Justices' comment, "To be sufficiently ventilated under the Grand Juries' inspection".
96. D.C.R.O., P. 227/CW.4, Vestry Minutes, 1803-1818, 19th April, 11th October, 8th, 15th November, 1808, 4th April, 1809, 30th April, 1811, 20th April, 1813, 12th April, 1814.
97. 22 Geo.III. C.83. Gilbert's Act provided a more flexible system for administering the basic Poor Law in that it legitimatised the granting of outdoor relief, including the payment of subsidies to inadequate wages. Workhouses thus became poor houses for the aged and infirm poor. It was a permissive Act and only 924 of the 15,000 parishes in England and Wales adopted it. S. and B. Webb, English Poor Law History: Part I, The Old Poor Law, (1927), pp. 151-2.
98. Dorset County Chronicle, 23rd May, 1834.
99. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 6th September, 1809, 9th August, 1811; Corporation Record Book, op. cit., ff. 483-95, 1810-11, Plea and Judgement of Ouster against John Strong the late Mayor; S.J., 25th September, 1809.
100. See Chapter Six, p. 156.
101. Benjamin Lester's Diary, op. cit., 14th October, 1791.
102. John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, pp. 151-2.
103. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 21, George Garland's Letter Book, 1794-1815, Garland to William Augustus Miles. W.A. Miles, (?1753-1817) was a political writer who had worked for the younger Pitt until his views became too radical for Pitt. He stayed in Poole on occasions after 1797 and was concerned with Garland in an abortive plan to import corn from Brabant in 1801. Garland was cautious in expressing his political views to Miles but was presumably influenced by him to some extent. P.R.O., 30/8/159, ff. 1-299, Miles's letters to Pitt; C.P. Miles, The Correspondence of W.A. Miles on the French Revolution, (2 vols., 1890), Vol.I, pp. 97-8, 101; Vol.II, pp. 306-7, 322, 371-3; Garland Letter Book; Howard V. Evans, 'William Pitt,...



103. cont.  
... William Miles and the French Revolution', B.I.H.R., Vol.XLIII, (1970), pp. 190-213.
104. See Chapter Six, pp. 157, 160.
105. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 22nd February, 1811.
106. See Chapter Six, p. 160.
107. Four of the men admitted in 1818 may be tentatively identified as having no close family connections with existing members of the Corporation. They included two rope-makers and a linen-draper. Six of the Dissenters admitted were Quakers.
108. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 4th August, 13th September, 1819.
109. In particular their rights to take part in the election of officers and new members of the Corporation had been disputed from time to time. There had been controversy over the election of officers by non-resident members in 1804 and 1807. P.B.A., S. 157, J. Dampier, Opinion on the Rejection of John Strong's Vote, 10th April, 1804; Garland Letter Book, op. cit., George Garland to Joseph Garland, 12th September, 1807.
110. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 7th September, 5th October, 1825.
111. Ibid, 7th September, 1813.
112. W. Mate, Then and Now or Fifty Years Ago, Facts Ancient and Modern connected with the County of Dorset and the South West of England, (Poole and Bournemouth, 1883), pp. 42-3, 77-8; S.J., 20th September, 1830.
113. Brock, op. cit., p. 93.
114. P.B.A., Printed List of the Burgesses, 16th September, 1830. Occupations have been established by reference to the National Commercial Directory, (J. Pigot & Co., 1830) and the Salisbury Journal and Dorset County Chronicle. Religious affiliations have been established by reference to the records of the Congregational and Unitarian Churches, and in the case of Quakers to records of their affirmation when admitted to the Corporation. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 20th September, 1830.
115. G.E. Welch, 'Municipal Reform in Plymouth', Devonshire Association, Vol.96, (1964), pp. 318-38.
116. A. Temple Patterson, A History of Southampton 1700-1914, Vol.I, pp. 122-3.

117. R.G. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants: The Merchant Community in Leeds 1700-1830, pp. 173-4; A. Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester 1780-1850, (Leicester, 1954), pp. 140-5.
118. Graham Bush, Bristol and Its Municipal Government 1820-1851, Bristol Record Society, Vol.XXIX, (1976), p. 93.
119. Ibid, pp. 4-6, 46-9, 82.
120. Ibid, pp. 6-11, 80-82; Patterson, History of Southampton, op. cit., p. 124.
121. Wilson, op. cit., pp. 168-75; Patterson, Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester, op. cit., pp. 27-8, 39-40, 61-2, 88, 110-1, 130, 141-5.
122. The Corporation's rental increased from £534-9-7½ in 1805 to £1,021-11-6½ in 1816. P.B.A., MR.63, Corporation Rental, 1805, MR.69, Corporation Rental, 1816. This was due in part to rents received from the enclosure allotments.
123. G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, (1962), p. 39.
124. Ibid, p. 40.
125. Sydenham, op. cit., p. 450.
126. D. Beamish, J. Hillier and H.F.V. Johnstone, Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset, Vol.I, pp. 109-10.
127. S.J., 31st December, 1792, 6th, 13th May, 1793.
128. Ibid, 3rd October, 1825; P.B.A., Printed Handbill, 'Amator Libertatis', 28th October, 1825; P.B.A., Printed Handbill, 2nd February, 1827.
129. This was admitted by one of its leading supporters, George Kemp, Deacon of the Congregational Church, in a speech made in 1831. Dorset County Chronicle, 14th April, 1831.
130. Cannon, op. cit., pp. 167-172; Patterson, Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester, op. cit., pp. 106, 112.
131. For example, in Liverpool (Sanderson, op. cit.), Bristol, (Bush, op. cit.) and Leicester (Patterson, op. cit.).
132. Chapter Six, pp. 161-2.
133. Matthews, op. cit., p. 600; P. Perry, 'The Newfoundland Trade, the Decline and Demise of the Port of Poole 1815-1894', The American Neptune, (October, 1968), pp. 275-283.
134. S.J., 23rd October, 1820, 4th February, 1822.
135. Bankruptcies of Poole traders were recorded in the following issues of the Salisbury Journal:  
21st June, 1824 (Joseph Barter, timber merchant and burgess); ...

135. cont.

- ..12th September, 1825 (Richard Linthorne, twine manufacturer and burgess);
- 26th February, 1827 (Charles Baskett, wine dealer and chapman);
- 16th August, 1830 (James Bristowe, spirit dealer and commission merchant);
- 14th February, 1831 (F. Baker, iron manufacturer);
- 27th June, 1831 (D. Lodge, ironmonger).
136. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 25th, 27th September, 3rd, 20th October, 1820.
137. S.J., 23rd September, 1826.
138. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 7th April, 5th May, 2nd June, 6th October, 3rd November, 1830.
139. P.J. Perry, 'Return Cargoes and Small Port Survival', Proc., D.N.H.A.S., Vol.89, (1968), pp. 314-7; Sydenham, op. cit., p. 401.
140. P.J. Perry, 'A Note on Agricultural Trade at Poole and Weymouth 1815-1914', Proc., D.N.H.A.S., Vol.97, (1976), pp. 35-6; Sydenham, op. cit., p. 401.
141. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 5th September, 1827, 2nd April, 1828; P.B.A., MR.78A, Draft Rental, 1820.
142. Surpluses reported in Corporation Monthly Meeting Book.
143. Matthews, op. cit., pp. 600-1.

CHAPTER SIX  
POLITICS AND ELECTIONS 1790-1831

Throughout this period the electors of Poole continued to be dominated by the oligarchy of merchants which controlled the Corporation, although after 1825 the merchants had to share their influence with the Lord of the Manor of Canford, the Hon. W.F.S. Ponsonby. Three major issues were in the background of elections in Poole during these years: the impact of government measures and the French Wars on their economic interests, the national problems of readjustment and reform in the period after 1815 and the collapse of the Newfoundland trade after the wars.

Parliamentary elections in Poole, as elsewhere at this time, continued to bear a strong 18th century stamp. Their transformation into struggles between rival political parties with particular programmes had to wait on fundamental changes in the constitution: the decline of personal monarchy, the emergence of more modern political parties and electoral reform.

Political parties could not come into their own until the monarch accepted that he was "the agent of the public".<sup>(1)</sup> One aspect of the decay of personal monarchy was the decline in the influence of the Crown in the early 19th century.<sup>(2)</sup> It disappeared only gradually and as long as it survived served to blur political divisions. The government interest amongst the Poole electors remained of some importance until 1812 and helped to preserve a non-party element in elections there.

The very existence of political parties in the early 19th century has been the subject of historical controversy.<sup>(3)</sup> Namier's contention that no political groupings bearing any real resemblance to modern political parties existed at this time<sup>(4)</sup> has been discounted. However, it is agreed that the emergence of the two major parties was a gradual process during which many non-party features continued to influence the conduct of politics.<sup>(5)</sup> Thus, after a period of confrontation between the Foxites and the Pitt-Portland administration from 1794 to 1801, the following eleven years saw small groups of politicians, such as those following Sidmouth and Canning, playing a crucial role in politics.<sup>(6)</sup> Their rivalries intruded into parliamentary elections. The Poole election in 1812 was affected by Canning's quarrel with the government.

Since political parties were still only in the process of developing, many political questions were not party issues. Michael Roberts emphasizes how ambiguous was the attitude of the Whigs to the war and

economical reform between 1807 and 1812.<sup>(7)</sup> Professor Mitchell identifies many further matters, some of them of particular interest to the electors of Poole, such as the Corn Laws and the protection of trade and industry, which were not party issues in the period 1815-1830.<sup>(8)</sup>

Finally, elections retained much of an 18th century flavour while the electoral system remained largely unchanged. It is true that "the British public was coming into its own" in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Politicians were becoming more responsive to the needs of the public for information and legislation.<sup>(9)</sup> This was a slow development however, partly because of the delay before any significant electoral reform was achieved in 1832. While so few of the population enjoyed the franchise, and population growth in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in fact reduced the proportion of voters in the total population,<sup>(10)</sup> personal and territorial influence, rather than matters of principle or policy, continued to dominate elections.

The electorate in Poole remained comparatively small. Between 1790 and 1831 the average number of qualified electors was 119, of whom it may be calculated an average of 95 actually voted in the polls taken during this period.<sup>(11)</sup> The membership of the Corporation was widened before the coming of parliamentary reform but the number of electors was but a handful of the town's population, which reached 4,761 in 1801 and nearly doubled to 8,216 by 1831. It was an electorate dominated by the town's merchants. Even after the large number of admissions made in 1830 the mercantile interest still enjoyed a majority amongst the burgesses. In the absence of further personal diaries, like those of Isaac and Benjamin Lester, we lack much of the close detail of the manner in which the leading merchants exerted their influence in early 19th century elections. There is no reason to suppose however that the methods then employed were intrinsically any different from those employed by the Lesters in the 18th century. The correspondence of George Garland includes numerous requests for patronage for his supporters<sup>(12)</sup> and much evidence of energetic canvassing in elections.<sup>(13)</sup>

Nevertheless, there were some signs of change in politics in the town. The most significant of these was the shift in the relative strength of government and local interests in favour of the latter. This stemmed in part from the generally recognised decline in the ability of administrations to influence elections. It was also caused by a greater emphasis on the independence of the town by the leaders of the local community.

## The French Wars and Poole Politics 1790-1807

The 1790 election was the last occasion on which the electors of Poole went to the polls until 1807. In the intervening period elections returned members who supported the current administration, except in 1806 when the Ministry of All Talents failed to contest the Borough. Nevertheless, the political life of the town was not as quiet as this electoral record seems to indicate and it is still possible to trace in these years the continued growth of a more critical and self-assertive attitude amongst local political leaders.

The political loyalties of Pitt's supporters in the town were strained in the years immediately following the 1790 election by bad feeling created by the result of the contest. Stuart, a man "not wanting of high feelings",<sup>(14)</sup> took his defeat badly and expressed his determination to come in for Poole in a very peremptory manner.<sup>(15)</sup> George Rose, Lester and his chief aides in the Borough became involved in tortuous negotiations to satisfy Stuart. Ultimately Lester agreed to stand down in favour of Stuart in the general election of 1796.<sup>(16)</sup> Before this compromise was reached Stuart's behaviour caused trouble between Lester and the administration, provoking him to attack Rose for withholding patronage from him and to stoutly maintain that Rose could not frighten him with threats that he would tell Pitt of the matter or his remark "that a single vote was of no consequence".<sup>(17)</sup>

Government policy towards Newfoundland also produced hostility amongst its followers in Poole. In the spring of 1792 the administration resumed the judicial reforms there, proposing a supreme court and the reform of the surrogate courts.<sup>(18)</sup> In a forthright manner, Lester told Pitt that these courts would turn Newfoundland into "a colony filled with lawyers, all harmony will subside, and the ruin of that valuable branch of trade will be fatal to this country". Moreover, the taxation proposed in the island "would pay salleries (sic) to officers that are not wanted - America was lost by it".<sup>(19)</sup> The government however persisted in its principal measure of reform and the concession of a committee of inquiry into the Newfoundland trade in 1793 did little to soothe the indignation of the merchants.<sup>(20)</sup> As McLintock points out, if it had not been for the coming of war government would have very likely continued its reforming policy,<sup>(21)</sup> and if that had happened the loyalty of Lester and his followers amongst the Poole merchants to the administration would have been strained to breaking point. As it was however, their grievances against government were not pressed thus far at this time. Lester remained true

to his assertion that he was a supporter of Pitt's measures in principle and while the quarrel over Stuart left some personal grudges there is no indication that he was in the end reluctant to stand down for Stuart.<sup>(22)</sup>

The one major reason why the electors of Poole remained generally loyal to the administrations of Pitt and Addington, (while continuing to display a critical and sometimes independent attitude), was the nature of the threat presented by the Revolutionary War and the first stage of the Napoleonic War.

The coming of war in 1793 presented a serious challenge to the merchants. It immediately resulted in difficulty in persuading their crews to put to sea for the fishing season in Newfoundland.<sup>(23)</sup> Soon afterwards, the merchants were busy securing convoy protection and negotiating the most favourable insurance rates.<sup>(24)</sup> Before long, they were faced by difficulties from the press-gangs, and by the end of 1794 at least five of their ships had fallen victim to privateers.<sup>(25)</sup> In a sense, the war meant then that the merchants had to concentrate their thoughts on the practical problems of maintaining their trade. Moreover, while the war conditions meant that serious grievances arose, over pressing especially,<sup>(26)</sup> they also threw the merchants into greater dependence on the government, particularly over the organisation of convoys and other protection from the Royal Navy.<sup>(27)</sup> However, although war conditions had some adverse effects on their trade between 1793 and 1807, their difficulties were not then as great as they were to become after 1807 when their principal markets in the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean were embroiled in the struggle with Napoleon. In the period 1793-1807 the Portuguese and Spanish markets were more often than not open and prosperous.<sup>(28)</sup> The bounty on imports of cod and salmon into this country from Newfoundland and Labrador initiated in 1801 was a considerable aid to the merchants.<sup>(29)</sup>

While the threat to their prime economic interest was thus in many ways contained during the first years of war, the merchant elite in the town were naturally affected too by the upsurge of patriotic feeling provoked by the increasingly violent and threatening nature of the French Revolution and further stimulated by the early disappointments in the war with France.<sup>(30)</sup> One result of this development was the disintegration of the Whigs, as the attempts by Fox to find a via media between sympathy for the aims of the Revolution and British interests foundered. By September 1793, the supporters of the Whigs in Poole were in disarray and John Jeffery, one of their leaders, told William Adam that since "the

present state of the public mind are (sic) so very unfavourable" to the subscription for Fox's debts "it were vain and fruitless for me to attempt to make a general proposal even to those we may think well-inclined". Accordingly, he had contented himself "with hinting without proposing the business, leaving it to the feelings of everyone's mind to direct their liberality".<sup>(31)</sup> A year later, after Portland had formally joined Pitt, Jeffery secured Portland's agreement that he should succeed M.A. Taylor, the Whig member for Poole.<sup>(32)</sup> Taylor, one of the Friends of the People and an opponent of the war, deplored Jeffery's "treachery and baseness" and sought refuge in a seat at Aldburgh.<sup>(33)</sup>

Thus Jeffery stood with Stuart in 1796 as a supporter of the Pitt-Portland coalition and was returned without a contest.<sup>(34)</sup>

Like many of the Whigs who joined Pitt, Jeffery proved to be more 'tory' than the Pittites in his support of the war.<sup>(35)</sup> In 1797 he raised and commanded a Volunteer Artillery Corps in the town and made use of this to advance his standing in the Borough, especially at the expense of the Lester interest.<sup>(36)</sup> Jeffery apparently carried with him a majority of the Whig voters in the town, for out of the 43 electors who had voted for the Whig candidates in 1790, 15 were still loyal to him in 1807, as opposed to 9 who supported his opponent on that occasion.<sup>(37)</sup> By 1796 then the Borough was represented by two members elected to support the administration because of the impact of the French Revolution and the war.

The revulsion against the French and revolutionary notions which brought the schism in the Whigs affected the other electors as well. Professor Mitchell's study of the Association Movement demonstrates that the government measures taken late in 1792 against the danger of revolution in Britain had a profound affect on public opinion.<sup>(38)</sup> This was true of Poole. Lester noted the government's action in his diary.<sup>(39)</sup> On 15th December an Association against Levellers was formed in the town, with a committee representing the leaders of opinion in the Borough and including both Lester and Jeffery.<sup>(40)</sup> This Association was in touch with the parent body, Reeves's Crown and Anchor Association in London.<sup>(41)</sup> Like other patriotic bodies it expressed its loyalty by arranging with the Corporation for the payment of bounties to recruits for the Navy, and also engaged in a 'paper' struggle with the local branch of the Friends of the People, which was apparently formed at the same time as the Poole Association.<sup>(42)</sup> In this way the Poole Association behaved as the super-



visors of the "defence of the social, political and economic establishment".<sup>(43)</sup> The conservative patriotism of the town's leaders thus helps to explain their general support of government men and measures.

There is however a need to qualify this argument. Professor Mitchell's identification of the Association Movement as representing "a solid party of order" consistently following the Reeves pattern has been challenged by D.E. Ginter, who points out that some of the associations were not wholly opposed to reform and thus departed from the aims Reeves was trying to foster.<sup>(44)</sup> This was at least in part the case in Poole. When the Association was founded, in addition to passing resolutions supporting the constitution, the meeting also called for "a Reform in the Representation of the People, and in the duration of Parliaments".<sup>(45)</sup> Since the Association was shortly to condemn the Friends of the People for organising a petition for "a thorough reform in and a shorter duration of Parliament", not too much should be made of its earlier action.<sup>(46)</sup> It is however a reminder of the continuing agitation of the householders of the town in the Commonalty interest, for according to the Friends of the People, it was the householders, as distinct from the members of the Corporation, who insisted that the resolution for reform was passed at the inaugural meeting of the Association.<sup>(47)</sup> The strength of the Commonalty was thus able to prevent the Poole Association from succeeding in what D.E. Ginter has identified as the principal achievement of the Association Movement - the defeat of the Friends of the People's petition campaign for parliamentary reform in 1793.<sup>(48)</sup> The Friends of the People in Poole apparently did not long survive the hardening of opinion against radicalism after the outbreak of war with France.<sup>(49)</sup> However, these heirs of the Commonalty were able to exercise some influence over one of the interests in the Corporation when radicalism revived after 1807.

The election of 1796 marked the end of a brief period of two party alignment in the Corporation. From 1796 to 1832 local and personal interests, always significant in the politics of the town, had greater freedom to grow. The absence of any clear party alignment in national politics after 1801, until its partial re-emergence in the post-war years, combined with some disillusion with the state of politics at Westminster, encouraged the leaders of local politics to behave with greater independence and emphasize the separate interests of the Borough.

The by-election of April 1801 was of significance in that George Garland, Lester's son-in-law, succeeded Stuart on his death. Over a year previously Garland had approached Rose to tell him that Stuart was no longer acceptable, and despite the protests of Lady Stuart and her son

Charles, who wanted the seat, government allowed Garland to take it.<sup>(50)</sup> The change in representation had nothing to do with attitudes to the new Addington administration as such, but came about because of the desire of the Lester-Garland interest to recover ground lost to Jeffery's interest since the latter's election in 1796, and also to ensure that the interests of the town were represented in a more direct manner than through the agency of a member of the landed aristocracy such as Charles Stuart, who had little real connection with the community in Poole.

Both Garland and Jeffery were returned unopposed in 1802.<sup>(51)</sup> Shortly afterwards both began to show some signs of independence. Garland moved an unsuccessful amendment to Addington's 1803 budget<sup>(52)</sup> and Jeffery opposed the 1804 Corn Bill.<sup>(53)</sup> When Addington's government crumbled in March-April 1804 both men joined the attacks on it made by Pitt and Fox.<sup>(54)</sup> Like an increasing number of the Commons they were presumably convinced that "Pitt must again be brought forward".<sup>(55)</sup>

However, the circumstances in which Pitt resumed office in 1804 meant that he faced a very different House than before, with a comparatively weak ministry. The Ministry of All Talents had in turn a precarious existence.<sup>(56)</sup> "Parliament was in a more fluid state than it had been since the death of Rockingham in 1782".<sup>(57)</sup> In this situation individual members were more free to follow their personal and/or political aims and there are signs of this in the conduct of the Poole members between 1805 and 1807. It shows most clearly in Jeffery's behaviour. When the Melville scandal broke in 1805 he was quick to exploit it and voted for Whitbread's censure motion.<sup>(58)</sup> Besides, it appears that he and his partisans in Poole were behind the special meeting of the Corporation which passed resolutions supporting the Naval Inquiry and asked the town's members to "take every opportunity of obtaining the removal, for ever from His Majesty's Councils, as well as from any post of public trust or emolument, all those who shall be found delinquents". Garland, who had opposed Whitbread's motion, partly out of loyalty to Pitt, was forced to agree with Jeffery in their joint reply to the Corporation that differences between them on how best to deal with the delinquents would not prevent them from securing "substantial Justice for the Country".<sup>(59)</sup> and joined Jeffery in voting for the criminal prosecution of Melville in June 1805.<sup>(60)</sup> At the same time however, Jeffery launched a quixotic crusade against Lord St. Vincent, Addington's First Lord of the Admiralty, which he was to renew in the following year.<sup>(61)</sup> Although he claimed that "he was an unconnected individual, not belonging to any man

or set of men" and had no axe to grind, he was voicing his personal resentment at the economies St. Vincent had made in shipbuilding in which he had an interest. In view of his later attempts to secure a government post, he was probably hoping to make a name for himself in Parliament.<sup>(62)</sup>

Garland was pre-disposed to show greater loyalty to Pitt than Jeffery but personal considerations meant that his allegiance to Pitt's administration had become strained before Pitt's death. Since December 1801 he had sought in vain for promotion for his son, Lieutenant Joseph Gulston Garland, R.N., and in January 1806 refused to attend the House because of his anger over the government's neglect of his requests.<sup>(63)</sup> In fact, his son was at length promoted in the last days of Pitt's administration in January, 1806, but Garland almost immediately sought further advancement for him, and this was to continue to colour his political conduct.<sup>(64)</sup>

The accession to power of Grenville's Ministry of All Talents, which gave the opposition Whigs office for the first time since 1783, threatened the position of both Poole members. Jeffery was the most vulnerable, but Garland was also in danger.

M.A. Taylor lost no time in seeking revenge on Jeffery for robbing him of his seat in Poole in 1796. As early as February 1806 he was urging the Prince of Wales to intervene in the town, holding out the prospect of using government patronage to take at least one of the seats.<sup>(65)</sup> Quite apart from Jeffery's siding with Portland, his continued attacks on St. Vincent, whose 'spiritual leader' was Fox,<sup>(66)</sup> made him persona non grata to the new ministry. Taylor's intrigues brought the prospect of intervention by an administration candidate. The ministry transferred government patronage to Taylor.<sup>(67)</sup> As a supporter of Pitt and Addington, Garland too feared that government intervention in Poole would cost him his seat. In order to try and keep the peace of the Borough he thus agreed to support Jeffery, evidently hoping that his own and Jeffery's local standing would deter or defeat government intervention, despite the influence of ministerial patronage. At the same time, he gave general support to the government, reserving his right to criticise it on particular issues.<sup>(68)</sup> Thus he attempted to secure amendments to the Property Duty and Quarantine bills and was forthright in condemning the Treasury for consulting Taylor over patronage.<sup>(69)</sup>

In the event, no rival candidates appeared in the general election of October 1806 and both members were re-elected. The constituency thus contributed to the mixed results the administration experienced from this

election.<sup>(70)</sup> Why was government intervention not pressed home in Poole? Historians have argued that the ministry did not achieve better results in 1806 because the government was ill-prepared for the contest it suddenly decided to stage.<sup>(71)</sup> However, in this Borough the ministry had plenty of time to prepare the ground for the election and it appears that the reasons for their failure to exploit their opportunities in Poole were these. Taylor's intrigue was directed to the Prince of Wales and the Prince's relations with the ministry were far from harmonious.<sup>(72)</sup> It may well be that government did not pursue Taylor's initiative far enough because of this. A much more cogent reason is that the ministry perceived that the relative strength of the influence it could command and that of the local interest built up by the sitting members had shifted in favour of the latter. This is not to say that government influence had by any means disappeared because Garland's correspondence shows that he was very much aware of its potential threat.<sup>(73)</sup> It is significant however that the only recorded instance of a struggle over patronage during 1806 ended in Garland's favour. This concerned the post of Custom's Collector and Deputy Customer. Jeffery wanted it for his son, but although Taylor was permitted to notify the new appointment, it was in fact made for the individual Garland had nominated, a member of a family in his interest.<sup>(74)</sup> "Local issues and personal factors" were thus important in explaining the result of this election, as Professor Aspinall remarked about the election nationally.<sup>(75)</sup> Garland's strategem of emphasising the independence of the Borough by uniting with Jeffery to keep the peace of the town thus succeeded in this election.

In May 1807 three candidates contested the poll. Jeffery and Rear Admiral Sir John Bickerton<sup>(76)</sup> stood for the Portland administration and were opposed by Joseph Garland, George Garland's elder brother, standing as an Independent.<sup>(77)</sup> Jeffery was elected with 55 votes but Bickerton and Garland tied with 53 votes each.<sup>(78)</sup> The Commons Committee, having considered petitions from Bickerton and Garland, decided that their election was void and ordered a fresh election.<sup>(79)</sup> Bickerton was returned unopposed at the by-election held on 24th February, 1808.<sup>(80)</sup>

By May, 1807, both national and local circumstances had changed radically since the election of 1806. The Portland Ministry conducted a vigorous campaign, using Treasury influence to the full and exploiting the cause of the King's Prerogative to good effect.<sup>(81)</sup> Moreover, their opponents were weakened by their poor record in office, their divided

leadership and the defection of the Prince of Wales.<sup>(82)</sup> In Poole the fragile understanding between Garland and Jeffery had been broken. Christopher Spurrier, the son of one of the leading merchants, hitherto in Garland's interest, was anxious to stand for the Borough,<sup>(83)</sup> while Jeffery, now intent on securing office from the Portland ministry, was determined to introduce a fourth candidate on behalf of the administration.<sup>(84)</sup> George Garland, who was ill, declined to stand again.<sup>(85)</sup> Jeffery eventually settled with the government that Bickerton should be a candidate with him.<sup>(86)</sup> Spurrier, having announced his candidature, was forced to withdraw two days later, partly because his youthfulness did not appeal to the electors but primarily because the Garland interest decided to put forward Joseph Garland.<sup>(87)</sup>

Joseph Garland had disclaimed connection with any party and stood as "a Candidate for your favours to enable you to exercise your elective franchise, without implicitly obeying a Ministerial Mandate and to rescue you from the undue influence attempted to be enforced".<sup>(88)</sup> As an opponent of two ministerial candidates it was natural that he should take his stand on the independence of the Borough. To some extent, of course, his opposition was based on a desire to retain power for the Garland interest and to prevent a complete triumph for its traditional rival, Jeffery's interest. Jeffery had out-manoeuvred Garland in the preliminaries to this election by exploiting his relationship with Portland and Spurrier's ambition. Once it proved impossible to keep the peace of the town, as Garland had done in 1806, the Garlands were forced to come forward as defenders of the town's independence. However, this stress on independence was more than a form of words or a cover for personal interest. It echoed the recent thinking of George Garland who had argued that with the departure of Pitt and Fox, 'the Country' should reassert itself. He believed that "the time is fast approaching when towns will choose from among themselves their representatives ... instead of receiving or finding strangers of whom they know nothing, to corrupt and flatter them, till they have obtained their object ...".<sup>(89)</sup> Garland and his brother were giving new emphasis to the independent feelings which had long existed in the town not merely because their opponents had placed them in an awkward situation but because the circumstances of the early 19th century encouraged the growth and expression of these tendencies. They represent the stirring of provincial self-consciousness and confidence prompted by the growth of communications, the economy and more sophisticated life.<sup>(90)</sup> This contributed to the coming of municipal reform

in early 19th century Poole. Garland's stress on the political independence of the Borough was in part a further reflection of this sophistication and even made it possible for him to consider the desirability of an extension of the parliamentary franchise, which he was sure would strengthen the independence of the Borough.<sup>(91)</sup> At this juncture he did not adopt parliamentary reform but his correspondence suggests that like an increasing number of the better-informed public he was becoming contemptuous of the parliamentary struggles which followed the breakdown of the Pitt and Grenville coalitions.<sup>(92)</sup> To many, politics in the first decade of the new century appeared to be an unedifying struggle for office between Ins and Outs, a struggle in which the real interests of the country and public opinion were ignored.<sup>(93)</sup> Napoleon's triumphs in 1806 and 1807 emphasised the shortcomings of politicians and exposed the nation's economy to greater dangers through the Berlin Decrees of November, 1806. While the British retaliation in the January 1807 Orders in Council must have satisfied Garland, at least temporarily, for he had urged such measures on the ministry, the increasingly difficult state of the Newfoundland trade in the spring of 1807 probably increased his concern for the independent interests of the town.<sup>(94)</sup>

In the election of 1807 this appeal to the electors failed but by a narrow margin only. An analysis of the poll shows much traditional voting behaviour. Garland's 36 'plumpers' included 10 members of the family or their employees. A number of the humbler voters, seamen, tradesmen or shopkeepers, hedged their bets by voting for both Jeffery and Garland. Despite his reputed expulsion from the Quakers for his military enthusiasm, Jeffery retained the support of the Quaker voters. There was however an unusual feature in the pattern of voting. The government interest, composed of the relatives of Customs officers and Naval or Army officers, may be calculated at 17 voters. Of these, only 9 plumped for the ministry's candidates and Garland was able to attract 8 votes from this group, including 4 'plumpers'. Despite the pronounced activity of the Treasury in this election, the independent candidate was thus able to make a much heavier inroad into the loyalty of the government interest than the Whig candidates had done in 1790. In view of the innate strength of the Garland interest in Poole the change was one of degree rather than kind, but the accepted view of the declining importance of the government interest in elections stands confirmed by the episode.

In a different sense however, the result of this election shows an increase in the influence of government - its influence on the Newfoundland merchants in the abnormal conditions of trade caused by the war. Jeffery and Bickerton attracted the votes of 14 individual merchants while only 7 supported Garland.<sup>(95)</sup> Even if an allowance is made for jealousy amongst the merchants of the business success of the Garland brothers, the margin of opposition to Garland indicates that a majority of them were satisfied with government's aid and protection for their trading interests. This is not surprising for at the time of this election the Newfoundland trade, although depressed, had some prospects of recovery. There was little hope in Spain and Italy but Portugal remained open to the trade.<sup>(96)</sup> There were still hopes that Russian defiance of Napoleon would succeed, and the Poole merchants dealing with oil took comfort from the sales they could expect in Hamburg, which the French had just evacuated.<sup>(97)</sup> Moreover, they were in broad sympathy with the Orders in Council. Although they traded with the U.S.A., they shared the general disparaging view of the Americans, and in any case believed that the U.S.A. government would never be able to impose an effective embargo on commerce with Britain, as a counter to her interference with American trade.<sup>(98)</sup> The Treaty of Tilsit and the French attack on Portugal, which was to bring a marked crisis in the Newfoundland trade, still lay ahead as they voted in May 1807. When they next voted in 1809, the tribulations of the Newfoundland trade would help to return an opponent of the administration.

The real significance of the 1807 election however is not that the government won it with the aid of the majority of the merchants in the Corporation but that it shows a significant growth in the critical and independent spirit among the electors. It is true that as in 1790 the margin between the successful candidates and their opponents was very narrow, but the difference between the circumstances of the two contests means that this narrow difference in votes concealed a real increase in the number of voters who were willing to oppose the administration. In 1790 the opposition to government was composed of Whig voters and the more spirited of the independent-minded amongst the electorate. In 1807 Garland's voters were made up of the minority of Whig sympathisers who had not followed Jeffery into Portland's camp and an accordingly larger number of independent-minded voters. In the peacetime conditions of 1790 a majority of the merchant elite in the electorate had opposed government while in 1807 this same elite supported government and found that a large number of other electors, of less social standing in the community, were

willing to give one vote to the independent candidate, so that he nearly beat one of the ministerial nominees. In 1790 the government under Pitt had a high reputation and was less likely to provoke disagreement from men of an independent mind. In 1807 the reputation of politicians, both in and out of office, was low, and the appeal of an independent stance in politics was greater. In view of the high standing the Garland family enjoyed in the town, care must be taken not to exaggerate the actual degree of support for Joseph Garland as an independent candidate, but the weight of the evidence indicates a real increase in the number of those voters who took an independent and critical view in politics.

#### Borough and National Politics 1808-1812

Despite their near success in 1807, the Garlands did not contest the by-election which returned Bickerton in 1808. There is no clear evidence of why this was so, but it is very likely that they were reluctant to spend more money and time so soon after the election of 1807, especially when their trade was facing new and deeper difficulties.<sup>(99)</sup>

By October 1808 rumours that Jeffery was shortly to succeed in obtaining a post from government caused George Garland to canvass the voters, initially on his own behalf.<sup>(100)</sup> In December, when it was clear that Canning was to recommend Jeffery for the vacancy as Consul General in Portugal, Garland put forward his son, Benjamin Lester-Lester, for Jeffery's seat.<sup>(101)</sup> He was opposed by John Blackburn, possibly a nominee of M.A. Taylor.<sup>(102)</sup> Lester-Lester, standing as an independent "against that overpowering influence which too often and too fatally destroys the Freedom of Election",<sup>(103)</sup> triumphed over Blackburn, who was aided by Jeffery and John Dent, one of Canning's followers.<sup>(104)</sup> The poll resulted in 56 votes for Lester-Lester, a majority of 28.<sup>(105)</sup>

Regrettably no poll-book has been traced for this election and it is not possible to examine the voting behaviour closely. It is likely that the Garland interest did not play quite such an important role as it did in 1807 since there are indications that Joseph Garland and his close associates did not give their full support to Lester-Lester.<sup>(106)</sup> It is possible too that the Treasury did not play a full part in this contest because of the serious divisions in the Portland administration, now generally unpopular in the country.<sup>(107)</sup> The result was a convincing demonstration of the extent of critical and independent feeling in the Borough by this time however.

One of the most important causes of this discontent was the state of the Newfoundland trade in early 1809. Since late 1807 the extension of French power over Spain and the invasions of Portugal had seriously disrupted the principal markets for Newfoundland fish and oil.<sup>(108)</sup> From



time to time Spanish and/or Portuguese ports were open for trade but the merchants had to gamble on the changing fortunes of war in the Peninsula. There were alternative outlets for their produce in the U.S.A. and the West Indies, but these markets presented difficulties too.<sup>(109)</sup> The bounty on imported fish eased their problems but it could not compensate them for the very grave difficulties they faced from late in 1807.<sup>(110)</sup> These crises sometimes brought the merchants to the point of despair over the future of their trade. In early 1809 they had been plunged into a state of depression by the news of the British collapse in Spain and the prospect that Portugal too would fall to the French.<sup>(111)</sup> Faced by such threats to their livelihood more of the merchants turned against the administration in 1809. Later in the war better conditions for the trade would mean that some would return to support government but in 1809 the crisis they faced was so serious that they felt compelled to register a protest at their plight.

The election of the independent candidate did not result from merely negative feelings of loss or resentment however. It also represented a more positive growth, the further development of local self-confidence, which now came to include support for political reform.

There were numerous aspects to the growth of provincial self-confidence in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. One was a concern to improve local government; another was the spread of radical ideas in provincial centres.<sup>(112)</sup> Something of both of these sentiments was present in the political aspirations in Poole at the time of this election. Radical ideas had been nurtured in the town by the Commonalty, and subsequently by the Friends of the People. Radicals in Poole were presumably encouraged by the general revival in radical activity after the Westminster election of 1807.<sup>(113)</sup> By 1809, as Denis Gray points out, disillusion with politicians both in and out of office, and the fresh scandal over the Duke of York, meant that "The field was left clear for the radicals."<sup>(114)</sup> The Poole radicals responded to the opportunity presented by Wardle's campaign against the Duke of York.<sup>(115)</sup> The newly elected Lester-Lester supported Wardle and between 1809 and 1812 was to vote against the administration on other issues, such as economical reform and Catholic Emancipation, which appealed to radical or reforming sentiments.<sup>(116)</sup>

This is not to argue that the Garland interest in Poole became imbued with thorough-going radical notions in 1809. Their concern to end the bye-law which had restricted the rights of ordinary members of the Corporation in mayoral elections was caused partly by a desire to repair

their interest in the town after the many years in which Jeffery and his partisans had enjoyed such advantage, and they shrank from such a radical measure as the total reconstitution of the Corporation. In the same way, Lester-Lester was forced in 1812 to temporise his opposition to the administration for a time. Nevertheless, the 1809 election was significant in marking a new stage in the self-assertiveness of many of the town's voters. In narrow electoral terms it meant that the Garland interest was committed to the support of Lester-Lester who was returned in each election until his resignation in 1835, and who continued to be an opponent in general of Tory ministries and a supporter of the Whigs. In broader terms, it represented an insistence that at least one of the town's members should be a local man fully conversant with local needs at a time when the competence or willingness of national government to meet these needs was increasingly suspect. It represented too a more sophisticated attitude towards the needs of the local community on the part of some of its leaders, an attitude which contributed to the municipal reform the Corporation of Poole undertook in the early 19th century.

Despite the significance of this election as a demonstration of growing independence and greater political sophistication there was naturally much of older and traditional political attitudes in it - the concern of the Garland family for their interest in the town and the recognition of the potential power of Treasury influence.

The history of the 1812 general election in the Borough was to show the continuing influence of these older political habits on the town. This election became a three-cornered contest between Lester-Lester, M.A. Taylor and John Dent. The latter eventually declined to face a poll and Lester-Lester and Taylor were returned.<sup>(117)</sup>

The Liverpool administration which faced the country in the election of 1812 was based to a large extent on the reconstitution of the Pitt party.<sup>(118)</sup> In spite of this, its formation left many politicians disappointed. Canning and his followers were excluded.<sup>(119)</sup> The Whigs, who had confidently prepared to take office under the Prince Regent, were forced to remain in divided opposition when he chose to rely on Percival and subsequently Liverpool.<sup>(120)</sup> Two of these members of Parliament whose expectations had been frustrated by the emergence of the Liverpool ministry sought election in Poole. Taylor, a follower of Fox, had become close to the Prince Regent after the latter's death.<sup>(121)</sup> The failure of the Whigs to gain office under the Prince Regent left him awkwardly placed. He was a proud individual, aspiring to become Speaker,

but would not support Percival's administration and feared that he would lose his seat.<sup>(122)</sup> Ultimately however, he went over to the Prince and relied on Carlton House influence to secure his election for Poole.<sup>(123)</sup> As Recorder of the Borough he had retained a connection with the town since Jeffery had taken his seat in 1796, and counted on this interest as well. Dent, a follower of Canning, was also badly placed in 1812. The administration was determined to attack Canning's parliamentary strength in the election and Dent had only a slender hold on his seat for Lancaster.<sup>(124)</sup> He too sought refuge in Poole, where he had introduced himself in the by-election of 1809.

The sudden changes in national politics since his election in 1809, and the arrival of Taylor and Dent in Poole, were an embarrassment to Lester-Lester as well. He had supported the Whigs on the Regency question, Economical Reform and the first parliamentary attack on Liverpool's administration in May 1812.<sup>(125)</sup> The Garland interest in the Corporation, the core of his supporters, had gone even further in the cause of reform and had included a request for "the defective state of the Representation in the Commons House of Parliament, the most gigantic of our national evils" to be considered in their address to the Prince Regent in February 1811.<sup>(126)</sup> Now that the Prince Regent had decided to eschew radical measures there were dangers that Carlton House and Treasury influence might be brought against him. In any case, the intervention of two candidates who had powerful friends and enemies outside the Borough threatened his position in the town. A further complication for Lester-Lester was the determination of Christopher Spurrier to stand for the Borough if he could.<sup>(127)</sup> Lester-Lester and his father were forced into tortuous negotiations with Taylor, Dent and Spurrier in order to save Lester-Lester's seat.

In the event, the Garlands declined Dent's offer to stand jointly with Lester-Lester and accepted Charles Arbuthnot's offer, made on behalf of Liverpool, that Lester-Lester should have the assistance of government if he stood with Taylor.<sup>(128)</sup> It may well be that the Garlands were persuaded to adopt this course not merely out of fear of the administration's hostility, but because of the turn in the fortunes of the Newfoundland trade. The year 1810 had been especially unfortunate for the Newfoundland merchants. George Garland's brother had been forced to stop business in the crisis. But trade with the Iberian Peninsula and Italy made a vigorous recovery in 1811 which was maintained in the next year.<sup>(129)</sup> The American War beginning in 1812 if anything favoured the

Newfoundland merchants.<sup>(130)</sup> By the time of this election it is thus likely that many of the Poole merchants were more favourably inclined to supporting government than they had been in 1809, when the Garlands had carried the election.

As a result of this arrangement Lester-Lester and Taylor received the support of the Treasury, and Taylor was endorsed by Carlton House. Despite Dent's hopes that the Garlands and Taylor would fall out, the clearly uneasy alliance between the two interests survived and Dent was ultimately forced to abandon the struggle.<sup>(131)</sup>

The intrusion of political struggles at Westminster in this election thus forced the Garland interest, which stood for the independence of the Borough, into a compromise with the influence of government. Although economical reform had weakened Treasury influence by this time, the Poole election, and those in other constituencies where Canningite candidates stood, showed that this influence could still affect the result of elections.<sup>(132)</sup> Admittedly, the ability of Lester-Lester to maintain his independent stance was weakened in 1812 by Spurrier's intervention, but even without this, the complications which Taylor and Dent introduced into this election would have dictated some compromise with one or other of them.

However, while it is correct to emphasise the frailty of an independent political interest when it was confronted by powerful forces from outside the Borough, care must be taken not exaggerate the extent of the retreat made by Lester-Lester. Oldfield describes Lester-Lester as 'ratting' to keep his seat.<sup>(133)</sup> It is true that his father claimed in 1814 that he had persuaded his son to give up his hostility to government, and significantly no votes by Lester-Lester are recorded in 1812.<sup>(134)</sup> However, in 1813, after his re-election with government aid, he supported Burdett on the Regency and Grattan on Catholic Emancipation. By 1816 he was once again voting regularly in opposition.<sup>(135)</sup> Oldfield's comment exaggerated the real extent of Lester-Lester's retreat from independence. He appears to have trimmed his sails temporarily - in deference to his father's growing conservatism and desire to obtain further advancement in the Navy for Lester-Lester's twin brother.

The Poole election of 1812 thus showed the conflict between old and new political attitudes, between the traditional influence of government and politicians closely related to national political leaders and the emergent aspirations of a local community to entrust representation to a local individual more fully conversant with the needs of that community. These aspirations were checked but not defeated by the older political attitudes.

## Post-War Problems and Elections 1814-1820

National rejoicing over the conclusion of war in 1814-5 was soon followed by a sense of disillusion as the magnitude of the task of returning to normality was realised.<sup>(136)</sup> War weariness and the calamitous economic depression of 1816 reinforced the demand for retrenchment and reduction in taxation; the government's efforts to secure a return to the status quo ante bellum by such measures as the 1815 Corn Law excited sectional interests.<sup>(137)</sup> The revival of popular radical activity frightened the property owners.<sup>(138)</sup>

The merchants of Poole were as sensitive to these economic and fiscal problems as the commercial men in other centres. They joined in the outcry against the Corn Law, the Property Tax and "all useless places, pensions, appointments and establishments".<sup>(139)</sup> They had far greater cause for alarm however, in the state of the Newfoundland trade. After a period of marked prosperity in which they were busy supplying the needs of the civilian population in Portugal and Spain, and Wellington's army, their trade began to fall sharply away in 1814. Both Portugal and Spain were economically depressed by the internal effects of the war, the loss of their American colonies and political unrest.<sup>(140)</sup> Peace meant a return of French and American competition, aided by the British government's concession of their fishing rights in Newfoundland.<sup>(141)</sup> There were grave problems for the merchants in Newfoundland itself too. The most serious challenge lay in the rise of political leaders in the island and their demand for constitutional government. The phenomenal increase in Newfoundland's population during the war years and the post-war distress and disorders helped provoke resentment against the power of the Poole merchants.<sup>(142)</sup>

As before, the merchants sought the aid of government. After an inconclusive debate in 1815, Taylor returned to the issue in 1817, and the ministry conceded a Select Committee in which both Taylor and Lester-Lester participated.<sup>(143)</sup> However, this provided little real comfort to the merchants. At a time when there was "an increasing tendency to subjugate old imperial theory to good business practice rather than try to reconcile the two",<sup>(144)</sup> the ministry refused to meet the merchants' demands for a renewal of the war-time fish bounty, the removal of large numbers of Newfoundland's population and the termination of French fishing rights. Instead the government moved slowly towards the reform of government in the island; three statutes in 1824 repealed the old fishing laws and recognised at last that the island was a colony.<sup>(145)</sup> Finally, in 1832, representative government was granted to Newfoundland.<sup>(146)</sup>

Initially, the Newfoundland merchants in Poole were united in their reaction to the problems of their trade in the post-war years - they sought the assistance of government. After 1817 however, some of them realised that they could no longer depend on government intervention on their behalf and that a profound change was taking place in the terms of their trade. Amongst those who saw the need for the merchants to accommodate themselves to the changes in government policy and economic conditions was George Garland. He not only reduced the scope of his trade, but recognised the need for the reform of government in Newfoundland.<sup>(147)</sup> His partner, George Robinson, M.P. for Worcester, played a leading part in pressing for this reform, and was supported by Lester-Lester.<sup>(148)</sup> Other merchants appear to have refused to come to terms with the changes in the trade. Encouraged by a temporary revival of its prosperity in the 1820s, they clung to their traditional methods and continued to hope that government would in the end save their privileged position in Newfoundland.<sup>(149)</sup>

Since there is no documentary evidence that the state of the trade was a question in the elections of this period, it is difficult to chart its precise influence on voting behaviour. However, the issue was of such gravity in the town that it must have affected the course of elections. In as much as it meant hostility to the Tory administrations, it provided added support for the Garland interest and Lester-Lester. This interest profited too from the more positive support of those merchants who agreed with Garland that they must find their own solutions to their problems and accept the changes that were occurring in the trade. At the same time, those of the merchants who still hoped for a change of heart by government and retained the traditional outlook of the trade continued to provide general support for the Tory administrations. The division of opinion on the issue thus helped shape the results of the elections of 1818 and 1820, when one member was returned for the administration and one in opposition. (By the time of the subsequent election in 1826, the intervention of the Whig Lord of the Manor of Canford and Poole resulted in both seats being won by the opposition).

In 1818 the poll was contested by three candidates. Lester-Lester and John Dent were returned with 56 and 48 votes respectively. They had agreed to oppose Christopher Spurrier who obtained 33 votes.<sup>(150)</sup>

One of the principal marks of interest in the 1818 election was the way in which it echoed the main issue of the election of 1812. Was the Borough to be represented by local men or was it to accept men from outside who enjoyed strong connections with the parties at Westminster? The

question arose because both Dent and Taylor had renewed their efforts to secure election for the Borough.<sup>(151)</sup> Once Canning had joined Liverpool's ministry Dent had become a supporter of the administration and had evidently cultivated an interest in Poole after his earlier appearances in the town. Taylor, who had agreed in 1812 to make an interest for Spurrier and retire in 1818 in his favour, aimed at playing a double game and by 1817 was intent on standing jointly with Dent.<sup>(152)</sup> To save Lester-Lester's seat in 1818, Garland and his son made an agreement with Dent, and opposed Spurrier. Spurrier insisted on standing in the election however.<sup>(153)</sup>

This election thus revealed the continuing strength of the Garland interest, which attracted as before the votes of those who favoured a critical and broadly independent stance in politics. If anything, this impulse was stronger than in 1812 for Spurrier had belonged to the Garland interest and presumably drew some votes from it. Nevertheless, just as in 1812 the Garlands had been forced to compromise with the administration, so in 1818 they had been compelled to reach an understanding with the ministerial candidate in order to make sure of Lester-Lester's seat. On this last occasion however, there is no known evidence that potential Treasury influence prompted their agreement with Dent since Taylor had now lost the favour of the Prince Regent, and could no longer rely on his influence.<sup>(154)</sup> Their fear that Lester-Lester would not be returned stemmed from their apprehension of Taylor's intrigues with Dent and the voters, and from the belief that the division of the votes of those electors hostile to government between three candidates (Lester-Lester, Taylor and Spurrier) might well leave the former in a minority. The understanding with Dent was thus designed to drive away Taylor. It was a tactical move forced on them by the particular circumstances of the Borough in this election - Taylor's double-dealing and Spurrier's insistence on coming forward - rather than a retreat in face of government influence, as had happened in 1812. This election confirms the underlying trend for government influence to decline in face of strongly based local interests. It went against the tide in this general election in as much as it produced a gain for the ministry,<sup>(155)</sup> but this resulted from the peculiar circumstances of the Poole election of 1812, and not from any swing of opinion in favour of government.

The understanding between the Garlands and Dent was maintained both before and after the election of 1820, when Lester-Lester and Dent were returned without opposition.<sup>(156)</sup> There were a number of reasons for this. Neither side wanted the trouble and expense of a contested election.

Disagreement between Garland and his son over money matters probably reinforced their natural desire to avoid a contest.<sup>(157)</sup> Until Spurrier achieved his ambition and entered Parliament for Bridport in 1820, his hostility to the Garlands over their alleged breach of faith in 1817-8 made it safer for them to continue the pact with Dent and deter Spurrier or any other third candidate from standing for the town. Moreover, Garland's increasingly conservative attitude made him unwilling to try to dislodge Dent.<sup>(158)</sup> As it was, he was able to use Dent as an intermediary with the administration to secure patronage for his family and the town.<sup>(159)</sup> Garland was thus willing to continue this understanding with Dent for the subsequent election. It was however ended by Dent's retirement in 1825.<sup>(160)</sup>

The survival of this electoral pact from 1817 to 1825 was made possible by the limited nature of the electorate and illustrates the continuing strength of traditional political habits. While it was made and continued primarily to suit the convenience of the leaders of the two political interests in the town, it appears to have satisfied their followers. It enabled two principal groups of merchants to feel that their best interests were served by the representation of the Borough. While the supporters of Lester-Lester may be classified for convenience as Whigs and Dent's supporters as Tories, there is no evidence that either group had anything more than inclinations to support the respective parties at Westminster. Relations between the two interests in the Corporation were good. In any case, for part of the life of this electoral pact national party divisions were blurred. After 1822 the Whigs were increasingly willing to support the remodelled Liverpool administration.<sup>(161)</sup> In these circumstances the agreement between the two political interests in the Borough is understandable.

Those in the town who felt strongly on the issue which caused most feeling during this period - the treatment of Queen Caroline - had the satisfaction of knowing that their protest on her behalf was taken to the Commons by Lester-Lester.<sup>(162)</sup> Amongst the few other issues which stirred public opinion, that of the reform of criminal law was one where the townspeople were able to feel that the Commons took notice of their feelings.<sup>(163)</sup> As Professor Foord comments, the deficiencies of the representative system did not prevent the achievement of constructive legislation on such matters in the early 19th century.<sup>(164)</sup> This is not to deny that a concern for the more fundamental reform of parliament lay beneath the surface of political life in the town during these years, but the Commonalty were silent until 1825.



### The Intervention of the Lord of the Manor 1826-1831

Well before Dent's announcement of his retirement, his ill health had prompted speculation over his successor, and by the time his intentions were known two candidates were prepared to contest the Borough. These were the Hon. W.F.S. Ponsonby and H.C. Sturt. Ponsonby had become the sole trustee of the estate at Canford in 1825 and was taking up residence there as Lord of the Manor of Canford and Poole. He had powerful connections with the Whigs. He was the third son of the 3rd Earl of Bessborough. His brother was Viscount Duncannon, a leading Whig politician, and he was Lord Melbourne's brother-in-law.<sup>(165)</sup> Sturt was another Dorset landowner, with an estate at Crichel, some 12 miles away from Poole. A former member for Bridport and Dorchester, he was a Tory.<sup>(166)</sup> The poll resulted in the return of Lester-Lester and Ponsonby with 82 and 53 votes respectively, while Sturt obtained 33 votes.<sup>(167)</sup>

An analysis of the poll book reveals how much Ponsonby profited from his position as Lord of the Manor. He obtained 32 votes from electors resident in the Borough. In contrast, Sturt was able to secure only 16 of his 33 votes from Poole electors. Moreover, Ponsonby enjoyed the support of all but one of the voters who lived in the outlying areas of Hamworthy, Longfleet and Parkstone, where he owned much of the land.

The poll gives some indication of hostility to this manorial influence. It is true there were no significant abstentions amongst the electors resident in the town but 28 of the voters who supported Sturt significantly voted for Lester-Lester as well. They included men like Jeffrey's son and G.W. Ledgard who had been supporters of Dent and normally opponents of Lester-Lester. The latter himself was very wary towards Ponsonby. Sturt made clear in his election address that he had no wish to disturb Lester-Lester's position as the sitting member and shared some of the election expenses with him.<sup>(168)</sup> Lester-Lester, and the majority of his family 'plumped' for Lester-Lester and did not support Ponsonby. The contest was thus primarily between Ponsonby and Sturt. The latter attracted the votes of those who opposed the influence of the new Lord of the Manor.

The poll also confirms the decline of the government's influence in elections. The Customs establishment had in any case been reduced from 17 personnel in 1818 to 14 in 1826,<sup>(169)</sup> but there was no significance in the voting behaviour of the relatives of those officials who were burgesses, or in that of the R.N. officers amongst the electorate.

The general election of 1826 was noted by Peel as one in which little attention was paid to "serious political differences bearing on the general policy of government".<sup>(170)</sup> But the Catholic question did arouse serious controversy in it.<sup>(171)</sup> The election in Poole produced two issues. One was parliamentary reform, put forward by the supporters of the Commonalty, who sought the enfranchisement of the ratepayers in the town.<sup>(172)</sup> Unfortunately, the slender evidence that survives gives no indication of how seriously this issue was taken during the election. It is likely however, that it assisted Lester-Lester and Ponsonby. The other issue which appears to have figured in the contest was Canning's policy towards Portugal, Spain and South America. The Newfoundland merchants were pleased by his intervention there because of their interest in their traditional markets in the Iberian Peninsula, and the attempt to develop alternative markets in Brazil.<sup>(173)</sup> Significantly, Ponsonby made a point of stressing his support for Canning's measures and may have drawn some votes from Sturt by doing so.<sup>(174)</sup> The Catholic question did not arise in Poole. Whereas in other constituencies it cost pro-Catholic candidates their seats,<sup>(175)</sup> in Poole the two successful candidates were both pro-Catholic. Lester-Lester had long supported Catholic Emancipation, and Ponsonby's wife was a Catholic.

In the main however, the election in Poole was fought out on local issues. The result confirmed the continuing strength of the Garland family interest, unaffected by the death of George Garland in 1825. It demonstrated too the great advantage Ponsonby enjoyed as the Lord of the Manor over Sturt, who had but slender connections with the town. To an extent, this election confirms as well the long developing concern for the independence of the Borough - in the support given to Lester-Lester and the indications of hostility towards Ponsonby. At the same time, the successful intervention of the Lord of the Manor demonstrated the survival of older and more traditional political attitudes amongst the voters. However, care must be taken not to exaggerate the degree of deference towards Ponsonby; his correspondence shows that he was very much concerned about his reputation among the inhabitants of the town.<sup>(176)</sup> Some at least of those who supported him in 1826 did so in the hope that the local improvements he was proposing would assist the town's recovery from economic depression.<sup>(177)</sup> By no means did his success in the poll represent a complete surrender of the independence of the Borough to the Lord of the Manor.

The years between the general elections of 1826 and 1830 saw rapid changes in national politics: Canning's ministry divided the Whigs and Tories; the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and Catholic Emancipation finally broke the unity of the Tories.<sup>(178)</sup> Ultimately, in 1830, the Whigs and other opposition elements were able to draw together and present themselves as an alternative government.<sup>(179)</sup> By this time, Tory discontent with the relief of the Dissenters and Catholics meant that many of them were willing to support parliamentary reform.<sup>(180)</sup> Coincidentally, the economic depression brought forth the same cry from the middle class and urban working class.<sup>(181)</sup>

Public interest in the shifts in party fortunes and reforms in this period varied. Thus it has been argued that the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts resulted from the political circumstances of 1827-8, rather than from any "vociferous agitation in the country".<sup>(182)</sup> Similarly, the reawakening of interest in parliamentary reform in 1827 over the attempts to reform the constituencies of Penryn and East Retford was confined to the middle class, but Catholic Emancipation aroused more general concern.<sup>(183)</sup> The widespread interest in parliamentary reform in 1830 was a comparatively sudden development.<sup>(184)</sup>

Public opinion in Poole appears to have followed the pattern suggested above. Rather surprisingly, the relief of the Dissenters apparently prompted no local petitions or public meetings. 1827 did however see a revival of interest in parliamentary reform; five of the burgesses raised the issue of extending the franchise to the ratepayers in the town.<sup>(185)</sup> They met with no success and there is no record of any further public activity on this question until 1830. Catholic Emancipation provoked more controversy in the town. It was condemned at one public meeting and in three petitions, and supported by one petition.<sup>(186)</sup> Both of the town's members played an active role in support of the Whigs, voting for the motions on Penryn and East Retford, for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and for Catholic Emancipation.<sup>(187)</sup>

Lester-Lester and Ponsonby were returned without a contest on 30th July, 1830.<sup>(188)</sup> However, the government had made an unsuccessful attempt to intervene in the election. A Colonel Mackinnon made a canvass in the town, approaching both the burgesses and the supporters of the Commonalty, but withdrew before the poll.<sup>(189)</sup> His attempt to enlist the support of the ratepayers was presumably the result of his failure to make much impression on the burgesses. The Tory candidate had made a poor showing in the 1826 election. There is some indication that the Tory-inclined voters had been divided and further weakened by the Catholic

question. In 1829 they had divided in the mayoral election.

The state of opinion amongst those of Tory sympathies who had supported Dent and Sturt resembled that in the Tory party nationally. Many of them felt betrayed by the surrender of Catholic Emancipation and began to accept parliamentary reform as a means of preventing any further liberal measures. This was true of most of the Poole Tories, who, although they had reservations about the extent of parliamentary reform, were shortly to join the Garland interest in supporting it in the Corporation. Since they had been attracted by some of Canning's measures, which seemed likely to assist the plight of the Newfoundland trade, they were also affected by the disappointment felt at the end of his ministry. In 1830 they had no intention of assisting Wellington, who tried to use this general election to drive the Canningites out of the Commons. (190)

Although the poll was not contested, and both candidates were supporters of reform, this election was far from a quiet occasion. Shouts of "The Commonalty for ever" were raised at the poll, and their supporters turned an election night dinner into a riot. (191) The Poole election thus resembled contests elsewhere, at least in part, not merely in the general support it indicated for parliamentary reform, but also in the manner in which the supporters of the Commonalty challenged the established political leadership of the community. (192) Because they lacked a candidate of their own, and because the existing candidates were reformers, popular feeling was not as pronounced as it was in constituencies such as Truro and Marlborough, but it was nonetheless a force to be reckoned with. The Corporation's decision to admit 96 new burgesses, including a group drawn from the humbler reaches of society, in September 1830, was a response to the Commonalty agitation.

It was the Commonalty, and the Garland interest, those members of the Corporation who were most enthusiastic for parliamentary reform, who forced the pace on this issue. They collaborated in a public meeting in December 1830 which adopted petitions for reform that were signed by 500 people. (193) A month later, the Commonalty held a second meeting, and in March 1831 they greeted the introduction of the first Reform Bill with a further meeting and a loyal address. (194) It was not until after this that the Corporation itself adopted a resolution and petitions in favour of reform. The resolution, composed by a joint body of Whig and Tory sympathisers, gave restrained support to the Reform Bill, expressing the

hope that Parliament would "bestow on this great measure your most mature deliberation and unceasing endeavours, that by the blessing of Divine Providence and by your united and accumulated wisdom, the same may be perfected, that the British Constitution may be preserved in all its force and purity ...".<sup>(195)</sup> The Corporation's reluctance to come out in support of the Reform Bill was naturally due in part to some unwillingness amongst the Tory burgesses to favour a Whig measure. It was also caused by an understandable hostility to the prominent role of the householders of the Commonalty in the reform agitation. The Commonalty leaders frequently referred to the disputed terms of the Borough charters, the battlefield over which the Corporation and the Commonalty had fought in the 18th century. They made it clear that they were not satisfied with the widening of the membership of the Corporation conceded in September 1830 as a means of gaining the parliamentary franchise.<sup>(196)</sup> Lester-Lester tried to reassure the burgesses that the enfranchisement of "scot and lot payers" would not deprive them of their corporate rights, but some of the Corporation evidently already feared that parliamentary reform would be followed by municipal reform.<sup>(197)</sup>

The Commonalty had no plans for municipal reform however. They were broadly satisfied with the local government provided by Poole Corporation and primarily interested in obtaining the parliamentary franchise. While they were radical in their enthusiasm for the Reform Bill, they were far from revolutionary. They represented the respectable householders of the town. Their leaders included one of the Newfoundland merchants, a medical practitioner, a solicitor and a former naval officer. As far as can be ascertained, there was no politically conscious working class in the town. The principal industry in the community was still the Newfoundland trade and its offshoots. This pattern of economic organisation divided the lower order of society and encouraged deferential attitudes - in contrast to the more sophisticated working class attitudes made possible by more advanced forms of economic organisation in the industrial areas.<sup>(198)</sup> The Commonalty thus reflected middle class opinion - the aspirations of men still in the main excluded from the Corporation and therefore the parliamentary franchise, despite the widened membership of that body. Even by the standards of the time, their attitude to reform was moderate. They made no attempt to exploit the arrival of the exiled Charles X in Poole in August 1830, and in March 1831 were careful to deplore the effects of the 1830 revolutions on the continent.<sup>(199)</sup> Nor did they gloat over the misfortunes of the landlords in the agrarian disorders of 1830, as some of the middle class reformers did in other towns.<sup>(200)</sup>

Thus, despite the excitement over the reform cause, a form of unity was maintained in the community. The Tory and Whig members of the Corporation had achieved a working understanding and those burgesses most favourable to reform acted as a link between the Corporation and the Commonalty, whose moderate conduct itself helped to prevent political divisions from becoming intransigent.

This unity did not last long however. By April 1831 the compromise between the two interests in the Corporation was coming under strain. The issue which then arose was not parliamentary reform itself, but the older question of the independence of the Borough which the Tories took up, partly out of genuine concern for the Borough's freedom from undue influence and partly for the sake of advantage to their interest.

In April, before it was known that a further general election was to be called, the Tories began to seek an alternative candidate for the town. They aimed at destroying Ponsonby's influence in the Borough. The boundaries of the reformed constituencies were yet to be finally determined by the Boundary Commission, but the debates on the Reform Bill made it clear that some revision would be made.<sup>(201)</sup> If the areas immediately adjacent to the old boundaries of Poole were included in a reformed constituency, Ponsonby's influence would be much increased, and because of his close connections with the Whig aristocracy, the Tories in Poole feared that both of the town's seats might be kept by their opponents. Moreover, the continued success of Ponsonby's influence would mean that Poole would pass under the control of a rurally based interest at the very time when its commercial future was in jeopardy because of the failure of the Newfoundland trade to recover from its collapse in 1814-5 and the likely consequences of the changes in the government of Newfoundland. Althorp's proposals in March 1831 to reduce the degree of protection for the Canadian timber trade<sup>(202)</sup> affected the interests of some Poole merchants and increased their sense of disillusion with Parliament.

To protect their interests and the independence of the Borough they brought in an independent reformer, Serjeant Wilde, who stressed his familiarity with commerce. But this attempt failed. Wilde refused to start a campaign against the sitting members and did not return to Poole as he had promised in the general election of May 1831.<sup>(203)</sup>

Lester-Lester and Ponsonby were accordingly returned again.<sup>(204)</sup> In an election in which "The magnates who had espoused reform had become popular beyond their wildest hopes",<sup>(205)</sup> Ponsonby had the added satisfaction of leading a large group of freeholders from Poole and district (including some of the Commonalty) to help the Reform candidates to

victory in the Dorset election.<sup>(206)</sup> For the Tories in Poole the noticeable deference of reformers to the aristocracy in this election was an added incentive to continue the struggle against the influence of the Lord of the Manor and secure a reliable representative of their interests.

#### The By-Election of October 1831

Ponsonby's decision to seek the Dorset seat made vacant by J.H. Calcraft's suicide in September 1831 resulted in a by-election for Poole. This was won by Sir John Byng, standing for the administration against Charles Augustus Tulk, a reform candidate sponsored by the Tory burgesses. Byng obtained 56 votes, a majority of 14.<sup>(207)</sup>

The Poole Tories had acted immediately to try and ensure that Ponsonby's successor should be selected by the Corporation and not thrust upon them by Ponsonby. One of their leaders called a meeting of the burgesses "who are opposed to the present system of thralldom under which the Borough has so long laboured ... for the purpose of considering the steps necessary to be taken to secure its future independence."<sup>(208)</sup> This meeting was attended by some 40 members of the Corporation, divided more or less evenly between Tory-inclined voters and Whig supporters. It resolved that it was expedient to nominate a candidate who favoured the Reform Bill "as it is desirable to avoid any violent political collision in this Town and County", and adjourned to allow the burgesses the opportunity to consider the candidates they wished to nominate.<sup>(209)</sup> At the resumed meeting two candidates were brought forward. At a further meeting eight more names were canvassed. They included: H.C. Sturt, the unsuccessful Tory candidate in 1826, G.W. Ledgard, a Poole banker, and Sir John Byng, a Lieutenant General, who was recommended by the Treasury.<sup>(210)</sup> At this point the co-operation between the two parties ended. The Reform 'Junta' adopted Byng and the Tories introduced Charles Augustus Tulk, after two of the men they had enlisted had canvassed the town and withdrawn.<sup>(211)</sup>

Tulk was in many ways a strange candidate for the Tories to adopt. A disciple of Swedenborg, he had ceased to be a member of the Anglican Church after leaving Cambridge.<sup>(212)</sup> A close friend of Joseph Hume and S.T. Coleridge, he had supported a wide variety of reforms in the 1820s as member for Sudbury. A man of independent means, he followed no profession or business. His principal recommendation to the Poole Tories was his connection with the Newfoundland trade; his wife had been the daughter of one of George Garland's partners.<sup>(213)</sup> His adoption was an indication of the determination of the Tories to do all that they could to check the influence of Ponsonby and his connections. It was a clear sign too that

an attempt was being made to create a local Tory-Radical alliance. Support for parliamentary reform was so strong that any candidate whose attitude to it was not plainly favourable stood little or no chance of success. The Poole Tories hoped to use this enthusiasm for reform and Tulk's radicalism to secure a dependable representative for their trade interests. The Tories in London sent a man down to Poole "to annoy the reformers".<sup>(214)</sup> However, he withdrew after canvassing the town almost certainly because of the prevailing excitement for parliamentary reform and a cool reception from the Poole Tories because of their hostility to the national leaders of their party.

In the election campaign the Tories did their best to keep the issue of the independence of the town to the fore.<sup>(215)</sup> Byng denied unconvincingly that he had come to Poole through the agency of Ponsonby and the Treasury.<sup>(216)</sup> His supporters concentrated on casting doubts on the sincerity of Tulk's sponsors towards parliamentary reform.<sup>(217)</sup>

Only 98 of the 177 qualified electors voted. This is explained in part by the comparatively low turn out among the out-voters - only 23 of the 53 known voters in this group attended the poll. Many of those who stayed away presumably felt that a by-election was of no great importance at this time, especially when it was likely to be the last occasion on which they were likely to be eligible to vote in Poole. Once the out-voters are excluded from the total, the turn out of voters improves - 71 out of the 124 resident voters went to the poll. The highest turn out was amongst the burgesses admitted in September 1830. 52 of the 64 electors in this group voted, showing the excitement caused by the prospect of reform, since many of these new voters belonged to the more humble ranks of society.

The number of burgesses with longer service in the Corporation who voted in October 1831 was however relatively low - only 19 of them voted. There is some evidence that the issue of the independence of the Borough from outside influence helped to bring about abstentions. Only one voter who belonged to the Garland family, or who was closely associated with it, took part in the election; 16 abstained. Lester-Lester and his family may have abstained from voting for Byng out of respect for Tulk's connection with the family business, but it is very likely that they were above all concerned to demonstrate the independence of their interest in an election in which the issue of independence of the Borough was so prominent.



Further evidence of the success of the Tories in raising this issue in 1831 may be adduced from the nature of the support received by the two candidates. Whereas in 1826 the Tory candidate had relied very heavily on out-voters - his supporters amongst them had outnumbered the votes of residents - in 1831 Tulk received only 4 votes from non-resident electors. It was Byng who relied on the out-voters for his election. He received 19 votes from them, including 6 votes from individuals subject to the territorial influence of Ponsonby. Despite the prevailing excitement for reform, and the doubts cast on the sincerity of the Tories on this issue, they were able to secure 26 votes from the newly qualified electors, an equal number to those given to Byng by this category of voters. A majority of these new voters remained supporters of the Tory candidates in the general election of 1835, the next election for which a poll book has been traced.<sup>(218)</sup> This suggests that they supported Tulk not so much because he stood as a reformer, but because he stood for the independence of the town against the influence of Canford and the Treasury.

The last election held in the town under the unreformed electoral system was thus fought to a large extent over the issue of the independence of the Borough, the issue which had been prominent in all of the contested elections since 1790. Government interference in the electorate through the votes of office-holders, or their relatives, was by now of little or no consequence; its place had been taken by the more immediate influence of the Lord of the Manor.

The emphasis on the independence of the Borough had grown stronger in Poole since the 1790s partly because the course of national politics had encouraged stronger assertions of independence by the leaders of the local community. At first it resulted in the election of an independent member sympathetic to the cause of reform. By 1830 however, the disruption of the Tory party nationally, and the local problems faced by its sympathisers in the town, prompted them to adopt an independent attitude in politics. Parliament appeared to have grown away from them. Some Poole Tories were horrified by Catholic Emancipation. All of them blamed Parliament for failing to provide remedies for their commercial difficulties and the threat to their power in Newfoundland. In an attempt to make Parliament more responsive to their wishes, they joined in supporting parliamentary reform and tried to secure the success of their own reform candidate in 1831. In taking this independent course they were also seeking to counter the threat they saw from the powerful influence of the Lord of the Manor.

1. A.S. Foord, His Majesty's Opposition 1714-1830, p. 450.
2. A.S. Foord, 'The waning of the influence of the Crown', E.H.R., LXII (1947), pp. 484-507; Richard Pares, King George III and the Politicians, (Oxford, 1953), pp. 188-90, 196-8; K. Feiling, The Second Tory Party 1714-1832, pp. 262, 274-5.
3. D.E.D. Beales, 'Parliamentary Parties and the Independent Member', in Robert Robson, ed., Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain, Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark, (1967), pp. 2-7, 12-18; D.E.D. Beales, The Political Parties of Nineteenth Century Britain, Historical Association pamphlet, Appreciations in History, No.2, (1971), pp. 4-10; Austin Mitchell, The Whigs in Opposition 1815-1830, (1967), pp. 1-6.
4. L.B. Namier, 'Monarchy and the Party System' in Crossroads of Power, (1962), p. 231.
5. Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 2-4; Pares, op. cit., pp. 191-5.
6. Pares, op. cit., pp. 190-1; Michael Roberts, The Whig Party 1807-1812, (1965), pp. 342-6; A. Aspinall, 'The Canningite Party', T.R.H.S., 4th Series, Vol.XVII, (1934), pp. 177-226.
7. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 106-7, 120-3, 125-32, 133-44, 146-9, 150-1, 153, 160-2, 169-70, 173, 175-6, 191, 199-201, 224, 236-8, 243-5.
8. Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
9. Pares, op. cit., pp. 198-204.
10. John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, p. 42.
11. See Appendix C for the figures used to make these calculations. The calculation made assumes that 40 voters were polled in the 1818 election for which no poll book has been traced.
12. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 21, George Garland Letter Book, 1794-1815; Garland to William Pitt, 16th November, 1804; Idem to Lord Grenville, 23rd June, 1806.
13. Ibid, Garland to Rev. Richman, 29th March, 1800; Idem to John Jeffery, 12th April, 1806.
14. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, (5 vols., Cambridge, 1962-70), Vol.II, pp. 198-9, George III to Pitt, 24th April, 1794.
15. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 9, Benjamin Lester's Diary, 14th, 18th January, 1794.

16. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to G. Hyde, 7th May, 1794; Garland to Lester, 8th May, 1794, Lester to George Rose, ? May, 1794; Lester's Diary, op. cit., 22-25th October, 24-25th May, 1796.
17. Lester to Rose, ? May, 1794, op. cit.
18. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 30th December, 1791; A.H. McLintock, The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland 1783-1832, pp. 72-3.
19. P.R.O., 30/8/151, ff. 250-3, B. Lester to William Pitt, 2nd February, 1792.
20. Commons Journals, 48, 26th February, 1793; Report of Commons Committee on Newfoundland Trade, (1793), XII; McLintock, op. cit., pp. 75-6.
21. McLintock, op. cit., pp. 76-7, 79-81.
22. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Lester to W.M. Pitt, 11th August, 1800.
23. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 9th March, 1793.
24. Ibid, 4-5th April, 9th May, 9th, 13th September, 1793.
25. Ibid, 26th November, 1793, 16th January, 1794; P.B.A., Mathews Collection, Town House Book, 1794.
26. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 30th November, 9th December, 1794.
27. Ibid, 21st February, 4-5th August, 21-23rd September, 1796; P.R.O., 30/8/249, John Lester to William Pitt, 20th January, 1795.
28. Jamie Vicens Vives, An Economic History of Spain, (Princeton, N.J., 1969), pp. 579-80, 603-4, 610; A.D. Francis, The Wine Trade, (1972), pp. 266, 272.
29. This bounty was authorised by 41 Geo. III, c.77. Considerable sums were involved. For example, by 29th January, 1802, 32 bounty certificates totalling £4,542.13.6 had been collected in Poole. P.B.A., Transcript of Poole Customs House Letter Book made by E.F.J. Mathews.
30. P.A. Brown, The French Revolution in British History, (Cass Reprint, 1965), pp. 90, 107-8; F. O'Gorman, The Whig Party and the French Revolution, pp. 71, 117, 180.
31. Blair Adam Papers, (Commr. Adam, 1795), John Jeffery to William Adam, 5th September, 1793.
32. Blair Adam Papers, op. cit., M.A. Taylor to William Adam, 9th October, 1794, 8th November, 1795; Lester Diary, op. cit., 19th October, 12th, 18th November, 1794; Taylor to Portland, 17th September, 1794, Welbeck MSS. quoted by A. Aspinall, ed., The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales, 1770-1812, (8 vols., 1968-70), Vol.V, pp.345-6, n.4.

33. Cobbett's Parliamentary History, 29, pp. 1304, 1138; 30, pp. 60, 453, 925; 31, pp. 82, 659; 32, p. 1138; L. Namier and J. Brooke, The History of Parliament, the House of Commons 1754-1790, Vol.III, p. 517.
34. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 27th May, 1796; S.J., 23rd, 30th May, 1796. (Kingsmill, Taylor's colleague in the 1790 election was considered for Taylor's seat at Poole in 1796 but declined because of the expense. Taylor to Adam, 8th November, 1795, op. cit.).
35. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 234.
36. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 13th, 15-16th June, 11th October, 1797, 12th April, 4-5th October, 1798; The Sun, 15th October, 1798; S.J., 6th August, 1798.
37. P.B.A., S. 1638, Poll Book, 1790; S.S. 1647, Poll Book, 1807.
38. Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-3', Historical Journal, IV, (1961), pp. 56-71.
39. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 2nd, 4th December, 1792.
40. S.J., 24th, 31st December, 1792.
41. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 31st December, 1792; Mitchell, 'The Association Movement', op. cit., p. 65.
42. Lester's Diary, op. cit., 21-22nd January, 1793; P.B.A., Corporation Monthly Meeting Book 1779-1813, 22nd January, 1793; S.J., 31st December, 1792, 6th, 13th May, 1793; Mitchell, op. cit., p. 74.
43. Albert Goodwin, The Friends of Liberty: the English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution, (1979), p. 264.
44. D.E. Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement and British Public Opinion', Historical Journal, IX, 2, (1966), pp. 179-90.
45. S.J., 24th December, 1792.
46. Commons Journals, XLVIII, p. 735; S.J., 13th May, 1793.
47. S.J., 13th May, 1793.
48. Ginter, op. cit., pp. 188-9.
49. Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 280-1.
50. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to George Rose, 22nd March, 1800; Lady Violet Stuart Wortley, Highcliffe and the Stuarts, (1927), p. 29.
51. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to W. Stiles, 7th July, 1802.
52. Joshua Wilson, Biographical Index to the Present House of Commons, corrected to March 1806, p. 229.
53. Parliamentary Debates, 1st Series, 2, pp. 879, 939.

54. Ibid, pp. 250, 319; Philip Ziegler, Addington, a Life of Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth, (1965), pp. 211-3.
55. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.IV, Introduction, p. XV.
56. Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 250-5.
57. Peter Dixon, Canning: Politician and Statesman, (1976), p. 80.
58. Wilson, op. cit., p. 304.
59. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 7th, 11th May, 1805. (22 of the 39 members supporting the resolutions and the Mayor were adherents of Jeffery).
60. Parliamentary Debates, 5, p. 378.
61. Ibid, 4, pp. 579, 629-30, 731-3, 738; 5, pp. 562, 708-11, 725-8; 7, pp. 109, 158-89, 193, 207-8.
62. Ibid, 4, p. 732; A. Aspinall, The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales, 1770-1812, op.cit., Vol.V, p. 345, n.4, p. 346, n.2.
63. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to Addington, 12th December, 1801, Idem to Idem, 18th February, 1804, Idem to G. Rose, 18th June, 1804, Idem to Lord Melville, 25th June, 7th July, 1804, Idem to William Pitt, 18th January, 1805, Idem to G. Rose, 9th April, 1805, Idem to W.M. Pitt, 20th July, 1805, Idem to G. Rose, 29th August, 1805, Idem to William Pitt and George Rose, 16th November, 1805, Idem to John Jeffery, 22nd January, 1806.
64. Ibid, Garland to George Rose, 3rd February, 1806, Idem to Sir Evan Nepean, 3rd February, 1806; P.B.A., Mathews Collection, J.G. Garland, His Majesty's Commission to Command H.M. Sloop Mutine, 22nd January, 1806.
65. M.A. Taylor to Thomas Tyrwhitt, 21st February, 1806, quoted in A. Aspinall, ed., The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales, 1770-1812, Vol.V, pp. 345-6.
66. Ziegler, op. cit., p. 182.
67. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to John Jeffery, 31st March, 12th April, 1806; Idem to Captain Digby, 9th April, 1806; Idem to Earl Spencer, 27th August, 1806.
68. Ibid, Garland to W.A. Miles, 18th, 25th October, 1806; Idem to Earl Spencer, op. cit.
69. Ibid, Garland to Nicholas Vansittart, 11th July, 1806; Garland to John King, 5th August, 1806; Parliamentary Debates, IV, p. 218.
70. Dixon, op. cit., p. 96.
71. Foord, op. cit., p. 436; Dixon, op. cit., p. 96.

72. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.IV, Introduction, pp. XXVIII-XXIX.
73. See, for example, Garland to W.A. Miles, 18th, 25th October, 1806, op. cit.
74. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to Edward Allen, Idem to Young West, 19th June, 1806; Idem to Lord Grenville, 23rd June, 1806; Idem to John King, 5th August, 1806.
75. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.IV, Introduction, p. XXXVIII.
76. Sir Richard Hussey Bickerton, Bart., (1759-1832), Rear Admiral, 1799, Vice-Admiral of the Red. In 1805 he became a member of the Board of Admiralty, a post he retained until 1812. Wilson, op. cit., p. 489; The Gentleman's Magazine, Vol.CII, 1, p. 175.
77. Joseph Garland, (1750-1839), was Sheriff of Poole in 1779 and Mayor in 1797. He was a substantial merchant in Poole.
78. P.B.A., S. 1647, Poll Book, 25th May, 1807.
79. Commons Journals, 62, pp. 663, 666, 692; 63, pp. 25, 34, 57-8, 63-4, 67.
80. S.J., 29th February, 1808.
81. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.IV, Introduction, p. XLII; Roberts, op. cit., pp. 229-30.
82. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 104-5, 230.
83. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to A. Weston, 26th March, 1807; Idem to Joseph Garland, 28th March, 1807.
84. J. Jeffery to George Rose, 21st March, 1807, quoted by A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.V, p.163, n.5; Garland to Joseph Garland, 28th March, 1807, op. cit.
85. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to George Rose, 10th April, 1807; Idem to John Strong, Mayor of Poole, 28th April, 1807.
86. P.B.A., Transcript of Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard Letter Book 1807-10, by E.F.J. Mathews, G.W. Ledgard to Messrs. Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard, 2nd May, 1807. (Original in D.C.R.O., D. 522/1).
87. P.G.M., C. Spurrier, Printed Handbills, 30th April, 2nd May, 1807; Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard Letter Book, op. cit., G.W. Ledgard to Messrs Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard, 29th May, 1807. (Spurrier's intervention caused his father to acquire and detain the writ for the election. See Commons Journals, 62, pp. 721-2, 735-6, 739, 748-9, 754, 762, 772, 789, 794, 798; S.J., 3rd August, 1807).
88. P.G.M., Joseph Garland, Printed Handbill, 2nd May, 1807.
89. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to W.A. Miles, 12th November, 1806.

90. Donald Read, The English Provinces c.1760-1960, a Study in Influence, pp. 17-20.
91. Garland to W.A. Miles, 12th November, 1806, op. cit. "I believe that my chance of success (in securing election) would increase rather than diminish here by delivering the Borough to the free-holders or even any inferior class".
92. Garland to A. Weston, 26th March, 1807, op. cit. "I wish I could attend (the Commons) if only to see the new countenance which the change exhibits in the House. I have no doubt but that there must be more pigs than teats and some will hold fast rather than resign their hold if possible".
93. Dennis Gray, Spencer Percival, the Evangelical Prime Minister 1762-1812, (Manchester, 1963), pp. 138-9.
94. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., Garland to Lord Aukland, 5th December, 1806; MSS. of J.B. Fortescue, H.M.C., 30, (1912), Vol.VIII, p. 473, Lord Aukland to Lord Grenville, 18th December, 1806; Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard Letter Book, op. cit., G.W. Ledgard to Messrs. Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard, 19-20th, 28th March, 8th April, 1807.
95. The votes of members of the Garland family have been excluded in this calculation.
96. Francois Crouzet, L'Economie Brittanique et Le Blocus Continental, (1806-1813), (2 vols., Paris, 1958), Vol.I, pp. 143-6, 149, 162, 174-5, 229-30.
97. Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard Letter Book, op. cit., G.W. Ledgard to Messrs. Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard, 8th April, 2nd May, 1807.
98. Bradford Perkins, Prologue to War 1805-1812: England and the United States, (University of California Press, 1968), pp. 2-3, 5-7, 20-1, 109-113, 133-5, 198; Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard Letter Book, op. cit., 20th July, 8th August, 1807.
99. Garland's Letter Book suggests that he provided £3,000 for his brother's election campaign in 1807. (Entries on 23rd and 25th April, 1807).
100. Ibid, G. Garland to Joseph Garland, 17th October, 1808.
101. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.V, p. 163 and n.5; P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 19th December, 23rd December, 1808; G. Garland to Joseph Garland, 21st December, 1808. ...

101. cont.  
Benjamin Lester-Lester, formerly Benjamin Lester-Garland (1779-1838), the twin son of George Garland. He changed his name in 1805 in accordance with the wishes of his grandfather, Benjamin Lester. Sheriff of Poole, 1804, Mayor, 1815, M.P. for Poole 1809-1835. (London Gazette, No.15807, p. 649, 17th May, 1805).
102. John Blackburn had represented Aldburgh 1796-1802 with Taylor. Wilson, op. cit., p. 69.
103. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, B. Lester-Lester to the Mayor and Burgeses of Poole, 26th January, 1809.
104. A. Aspinall, 'The Canningite Party', op. cit., p. 179; B.L. Add. MSS. 38, 739, (Huskisson Papers, Vol.VI), John Dent to William Huskisson, 25th September, 1812; Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to M. Hart, 15th February, 1809.
105. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.V, p. 163, note 5.
106. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to Joseph Garland, 21st December, 1808; Idem to J. Audra, 6th February, 1809.
107. A. Aspinall, ed., The Later Correspondence of George III, op. cit., Vol.V, Introduction, pp. X-XV; Gray, op. cit., Chapter 12, passim.
108. Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard Letter Book, op. cit., G. W. Ledgard to Sir Richard Bickerton, 19th October, 1807; Crouzet, op. cit., Vol.I, pp. 255, 257-9 and note 1, 302-3, 357-60.
109. G.W. Ledgard to John Gosse, 24th October, 1808; Idem to Thomas Chauncey, 24th March, 1st June, 1808; Idem to John Gosse, 17th March, 1808.
110. See above, p. 147. The bounty was subject to annual renewal by Parliament and the merchants and their representatives were concerned each year to secure its renewal. See, for example, G.W. Ledgard to John Gosse, 10th November, 1809. The utility of the bounty was also limited because of the long delays before it was paid. See, for example, G.W. Ledgard to Messrs. Chisman and Hill, 15th July, 1807.
111. G.W. Ledgard to John Gosse, 17th March, 1808; Idem, to Idem, 11th, 25th January, 1809.
112. Read, op. cit., pp. 17-19, 42 ff.
113. John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, pp. 151 and note 4, 152; Alice Prochaska, 'The Practice of Radicalism: Educational Reform in Westminster', in John Stevenson, ed., London in the Age of Reform, (Oxford, 1977), pp. 102-116.



114. Gray, op. cit., p. 191.
115. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, At a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town and County of Poole, 21st April, 1809; S.J., 24th April, 1809.
116. Parliamentary Debates, 13, pp. 639, 710; 20, p. 427; 21, p. 932; 22, pp. 1040, 1179; 23, p. 88.
117. S.J., 12th October, 1812.
118. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 345-6.
119. Dixon, op. cit., pp. 154-6.
120. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 361 ff.
121. University of Durham, Grey MSS., M.A. Taylor to Lord Grey, 28th October, 1809. Taylor was appointed to the Council of the Duchy of Cornwall. William Wardle Bean, The Parliamentary Representation of the Six Northern Counties, (Hull, 1890), p. 156.
122. A. Aspinall, ed., The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales, op. cit., Vol.VI, p. 33, n.2; Grey MSS., op. cit., M.A. Taylor to Lord Grey, 4th January, 1811.
123. B.L. Add. MSS., 38, 739, Huskisson Papers, op. cit., John Dent to William Huskisson, 4th October, 1812.
124. A. Aspinall, 'The Canningite Party', op. cit., p. 191; Wilson, op. cit., p. 329.
125. Parliamentary Debates, 18, pp. 119, 599, 574; 21, p. 932; 22, p. 1179; 23, pp. 88, 285.
126. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book 1779-1813, op. cit., 22nd February, 1811.
127. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to J. Calcrafft, 26th September, 1812.
128. Ibid, G. Garland to Lord Melville, 17th October 1814; Idem to J.B. Garland, 12th September, 1813. (Spurrier was temporarily assured by assurances that he should have Taylor's seat eventually, and that Garland would help him to obtain this seat, or another seat).
129. Gosse, Chauncey and Ledgard Letter Book, op. cit., G.W. Ledgard to John Gosse, 10th, 17th March, 6th April, 1810; Crouzet, op. cit., Vol.II, pp. 615-8, 686-8.
130. K. Matthews, 'A History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fisheries', unpublished D.Phil.thesis, Oxford, 1965, p. 598.
131. B.L. Add. MSS., 38, 739, Huskisson Papers, op. cit., John Dent to W. Huskisson, 25th, 28-29th September, 4th October, 1812; B. Lester-Lester to James Bayley, 23rd September, 1812.
132. Feiling, op. cit., pp. 274-5; Dixon, op. cit., p. 171.

133. T.H.B. Oldfield, A Key to the House of Commons Being a History of the last General Election, (1820), p. 112.
134. G. Garland to Lord Melville, 17th October, 1814, op. cit.
135. Parliamentary Debates, 24, pp. 725, 1074; 32, p. 1264; 33, pp. 117, 156, 452, 656; 34, p. 1129.
136. N. Gash, 'After Waterloo: British Society and the Legacy of the Napoleonic Wars', T.R.H.S., Vol.28, (1978), pp. 145-157.
137. Boyd Hilton, Corn, Cash, Commerce: the Economic Policies of Tory Governments 1815-30, (Oxford, 1977), pp. 3, 14.
138. Gash, op. cit., pp. 150-2.
139. S.J., 6th June, 1814, 6th March, 1815, 11th March, 1816.
140. Vives, op. cit., pp. 693-4; H.V. Livermore, A New History of Portugal, (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 278-9. (Protective duties in Spain and Naples also impeded the Newfoundland trade. See G. Garland to George Rose, 18th November, 1816).
141. P.B.A., Mathews Collection, Printed Memorial presented by the Merchants Trading to Newfoundland before the Conclusion of Peace with France and America, 11th January, 1814; McLintock, op. cit., pp. 107-20.
142. McLintock, op. cit., pp. 87-9, 124-7, 145-152.
143. Parliamentary Debates, 31, pp. 823-6; P.P., Select Committee on the Newfoundland Trade, VI, 465, (1817), pp. 465-513.
144. Gerald S. Graham, Sea Power and British North America, 1783-1820, (Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 262.
145. McLintock, op. cit., pp. 128-130, 137-8, 155-62.
146. Ibid, pp. 174 et seq.
147. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to J.B. Garland, 10th May, 1818; Idem to M. Hart, 9th July, 1820; Idem to J.B. Garland, 21st February, 1821.
148. A.H. McLintock, op. cit., pp. 181-2; Parliamentary Debates, 24, p. 593; S.J., 6th February, 1832. (George Robinson, M.P. for Worcester, 1826-37 and Poole, 1847-50, had been an employee of Garland and became a Director of the Bank of England and Chairman of Lloyds).
149. McLintock, op. cit., pp. 179-80.
150. S.J., 29th June, 1818. John Dent (c.1760-1826) was M.P. for Lancaster 1790-1812 and Poole 1812-1826. He was a partner in Child's Bank and acquired the nick-name 'Dog Dent' for his proposal in 1796 that a tax should be levied on dogs. An active member of the Commons until ...

150. cont.

... shortly before his retirement, he was described as "Not a first rate orator but considerably above a degree of mediocrity and may be justly pronounced a very useful member". G. Chalmers, Parliamentary Portraits or Characters of the British Senate, Vol.II, p. 169; Bean, op. cit., pp. 278-9; S.J., 1st January, 1827.

Christopher Spurrier (1783-1876), Sheriff of Poole, 1801 and 1805, High Sheriff of Dorset, 1824, M.P. for Bridport, 1820-6. He belonged to a leading Newfoundland merchant family which went bankrupt in 1830. His relations with George Garland were strained after the election of 1812 and made worse after his marriage to Garland's daughter in 1814. Beamish, Hillier and Johnstone, Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset, Vol.I, pp. 16-25.

151. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to B. Lester-Lester, 14th May, 1817; Idem to G. Garland, Jun., 12th September, 1817.
152. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to J.B. Garland, 12th September, 1817; Idem to Christopher Spurrier, October 1820.
153. S.J., 10th August, 1818.
154. Grey MSS., op. cit., M.A. Taylor to Earl Grey, 13th July, 1816.
155. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 116 and n.2.
156. S.J., 13th March, 1820.
157. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to George Garland, Jun., 10th March, 1819; Idem to B. Lester-Lester, 25th April, 1819, 9th, 13th February, 1821.
158. Ibid, G. Garland to B. Lester-Lester, 1st March, 1817. Garland advised his son not to oppose the suspension of habeas corpus in 1817 and supported the Corporation's Loyal Address to George IV on the trial of Queen Caroline. P.B.A., Corporation Record Book 1817-1834, 8th December, 1820.
159. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to J. Dent, 17th December, 1817; 26th, 29th January, 1st October, 1821; Idem to B. Lester-Lester, 18th March, 1823.
160. S.J., 28th September, 1825.
161. Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 171-188, 250.
162. S.J., 17th July, 27th November, 11th December, 1820; 22nd, 29th January, 19th, 26th February, 1821.
163. Ibid, 15th March, 1819, 19th February, 1821.
164. Foord, op. cit., pp. 460-1.

165. The Hon. W.F.S. Ponsonby (1787-1855), created 1st Baron de Mauley, 1838, was M.P. for Poole 1826-31 and Dorset 1832-37. Sydenham, op. cit., pp. 59-60; G.E. Cockayne, (the Hon. Vicary Gibbs, ed.), The Complete Peerage, (13 vols., 1910-40), Vol.IV, p. 175.
166. Henry Charles Sturt (1795-1866) later sat for Dorset 1835-1846. Michael Stenton, ed., Who's Who of British Members of Parliament, (3 vols., 1976-8, Harvester Press, Hassocks, Sussex), Vol.I, p.369; W. Mate, Then and Now, or Fifty Years Ago, p. 41.
167. P.B.A., S. 1659, Poll Book, 12th June, 1826.
168. P.G.M., Printed Election Address, H.C. Sturt, 30th May, 1826; D.C.R.O., Photocopy, Crichel Archives, H.C. Sturt Election Accounts, 1826.
169. P.R.O., Customs 19/17, Customs Establishment, 5th April, 1818; P.R.O., Customs 19/48, Customs Establishment, 5th July, 1826.
170. Quoted in Mitchell, op. cit., p. 185.
171. Ibid, and n.5; M. Brock, The Great Reform Act, p. 93.
172. S.J., 3rd October, 1825.
173. Garland Letter Book, op. cit., G. Garland to J.B. Garland, 21st February, 1821.
174. Dorset County Chronicle, 15th June, 1826.
175. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 185.
176. W.F.S. Ponsonby to Lady Caroline Lamb, 13th December, 1826. The Earl of Bessborough, ed., Lady Bessborough and her Family Circle, (1940), pp. 285-6.
177. S.J., 14th November, 1825.
178. Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 196-201, 216.
179. Ibid, pp. 222-232.
180. Brock, op. cit., pp. 55-58, 63-6, 78-80, 89-90.
181. Ibid, pp. 58-62, 70-1, 79, 105-6.
182. G.I.T. Machin, 'Resistance to the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts', Historical Journal, 22, 1, (1979), pp. 115-139.
183. Cannon, op. cit., p. 189; G.I.T. Machin, The Catholic Question in English Politics 1820-to 1830, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964), Chapter VII, The Anti-Popish Reaction, passim.
184. Brock, op. cit., pp. 75-8.
185. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 2nd February, 1827.
186. S.J., 2nd, 16th February, 23rd March, 6th April, 1829.
187. Parliamentary Debates, 17, p. 1056; 18, pp. 782, 1300-1; 20, p. 894.
188. S.J., 2nd August, 1830.

189. Ibid, 19th July, 1830; Mate, op. cit., p. 41.
190. Brock, op. cit., pp. 46-9, 86-7.
191. Mate, op. cit., pp. 42-3.
192. Brock, op. cit., pp. 88-100.
193. S.J., 13th, 20th December, 1830.
194. Ibid, 17th January, 7th, 14th March, 1831.
195. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 1813-1835, 10th March, 1831.
196. S.J., 11th October, 1831; Dorset County Chronicle, 24th March, 1831.
197. Mate, op. cit., p. 71.
198. Brock, op. cit., pp. 166-9.
199. S.J., 30th August, 6th September, 1830; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 7th March, 1831; Mate, op. cit., pp. 32-4. The respect accorded to Charles X supports Professor Gash's conclusions on the limited effect of the July Revolution on political feeling in this country at this time. N. Gash, 'English Reform and French Revolution in the General Election of 1830', in R. Pares and A.J.P. Taylor, eds., Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier, (1956), pp. 281-8.
200. Brock, op. cit., p. 111; S.J., 29th November, 1830; Mate, op. cit., p. 52.
201. Brock, op. cit., pp. 184-5.
202. Ibid, pp. 173-4 and note 36.
203. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, Thomas Wilde, 12th April, 1831; S.J., 18th April, 1831; Mate, op. cit., pp. 72-6.
204. S.J., 9th May, 1831.
205. Brock, op. cit., p. 200.
206. S.J., 23rd May, 1831; Mate, op. cit., p. 82.
207. S.J., 19th September, 1831; P.B.A., S. 1661, Poll Book, 6th October, 1831.
208. Dorset County Chronicle, 22nd September, 1831.
209. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 15th September, 1831.
210. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 19th September, 1831; S.J., 29th September, 1831. The Rt. Hon. Sir John Byng, created Earl of Strafford in 1835, (1772-1860). He had a distinguished career in the army, serving in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo and was one of the few army officers of high rank to support the Whigs. He was Commander-in-Chief in Ireland 1828-31 and Governor of Londonderry and Culmore. R.B. Mosse, Parliamentary Guide, (1836); A. Aspinall, 'Extracts from Lord Hatherton's Diary', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol.17, (1963-4), pp. 254-68.

211. S.J., 17th October, 1831; Mate, op. cit., pp. 92-3.
212. Mary C. Hume, Charles Augustus Tulk, a Brief Sketch (enlarged by C. Pooley), (1890), pp. 27-8, 30-3, 35, 76-7.
213. Ibid, pp. 8-9, 13-14, 16-19.
214. William Holmes to Mrs Arbuthnot, 29th September, 1831, in A. Aspinall, ed., 'The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot', Camden Society, Vol.LXV, (1941), p. 146.
215. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'The Poolite', 1st October, 1831; 'A Burgess', 3rd October, 1831.
216. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, Sir John Byng, Address, 28th September, 1831.
217. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'Spectator', 5th October, 1831.
218. Poole Historical Trust Collection, Printed Pamphlet, (Poole, 1835), 'An Account of the Election of Two Representatives in Parliament for the Borough of Poole, with a Report of the Speeches delivered at the Town Hall before and after the Election, together with an Account of the Introduction of Charles Augustus Tulk to the Borough and a List of all the Voters, Polled and Unpolled on the 6th and 7th of January, 1835'.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
THE LAST YEARS OF THE OLD CORPORATION

The rapid success of Ponsonby's influence in parliamentary elections and the coming of parliamentary reform had a particular and significant effect on the conduct of Poole Corporation in the last years of its existence.

In 1830-31 the Tory members of the Corporation had endeavoured to make use of the issue of parliamentary reform as a means of regaining direct influence over one of the town's M.P.s and countering the power of the Lord of the Manor. They had failed and their worst fears for the independence of the town, as they understood it, were confirmed by the 1832 Boundary Act, which added large areas of predominantly rural land to the constituency - areas in which the manorial influence was strong. The new electorate after 1832 included many more Dissenters who supported the opponents of the Tories.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Tories were alarmed at the effects which the redrawing of the constituency boundaries was likely to have on municipal government as well as on parliamentary elections. The parliamentary district after 1832 included two suburban areas, Longfleet and Parkstone, which had already attracted many of the wealthier residents of the old town. The suburbs had more pleasant surroundings than the old town and their residents also escaped the burden of the heavier poor rate levied in Poole. It was feared that the incorporation of the suburbs for the purposes of parliamentary representation would make them more attractive and encourage more of the better off residents to move into them.<sup>(2)</sup> Those living in the suburbs could not be resident members of the Corporation and would be unable to serve as its officers or take part in the election of officers. Thus there was a danger that the Corporation would fall under the control of its more humble members. Those belonging to the lower orders of the town's society would be likely to be deferential to the Lord of the Manor. Many of them who had the franchise after 1832 were enthusiastic supporters of reform and already willing to support the manorial influence for that reason. Irrespective of the power of the Lord of the Manor, it seemed likely to them that the control of the merchant oligarchy over the Corporation would be much weakened or even lost. The town's independence and commercial prospects would then be finally ruined.

The leaders of the Tory interest in the Corporation felt that they were beleaguered. They were prevented from achieving success in parliamentary elections by the Canford influence and the Garland interest

supporting Garland's son, and so found it impossible to achieve a compromise arrangement for parliamentary elections, so commonly made after 1832.<sup>(3)</sup> They decided that they must fall back on "the Corporation fortress".<sup>(4)</sup> Here they had a power base which they could reinforce. They had great success in extending their hold on the Corporation after 1832.

Under the leadership of the Slade family, virtually the only merchant house that was able to continue successfully in the Newfoundland trade,<sup>(5)</sup> the Tories attacked their opponents ruthlessly. Their methods of intimidation included exclusive dealing directed against the tradesmen amongst their opponents. They bought large amounts of property with a view to increasing their influence in the town.<sup>(6)</sup> The Garland interest had no stomach for this struggle in the Corporation. After the death of George Garland in 1825 the family interest had begun to suffer from weakened leadership. Benjamin Lester-Lester was determined after 1832 to retire from Parliament at the first convenient opportunity and his brothers also had little interest in remaining in the town.<sup>(7)</sup> Deprived of the leadership the Garland interest had traditionally provided, the supporters of reform in the Corporation were no match for their opponents. The Slades were able to capture the mayoralty in 1832 and hold it until the end of the Corporation. In 1833 they won the election of a new Town Clerk, Robert Parr, an attorney who had already proved his skill in managing elections.<sup>(8)</sup> They reinforced their power in 1834 by carrying the election of William Bond, a member of a neighbouring family of Tory gentry, as Recorder by 41 votes to 16.<sup>(9)</sup>

#### The Corporation and Improvements

The political struggles in the Corporation, and the continued economic depression, which were now causing a marked fall in the value of property in the town,<sup>(10)</sup> meant that improvements in the town were comparatively few after 1830 and soon became political issues.

In 1833 a public meeting supported the introduction of gas lighting.<sup>(11)</sup> The Corporation agreed to assist the project by providing land and the necessary lamps and pillars. Initially the project was supported by both the Tories and their opponents but disputes, arising at first over the placing of contracts, soon took on a party nature.<sup>(12)</sup> The Corporation, finding it difficult to provide all the funds they had rather rashly promised, applied to the town's members for subscriptions. They understandably refused to help, and sided with the Corporation's critics, pointing out that the project was one "on which much difference of opinion has prevailed" and objecting that the Corporation could hardly expect



private subscriptions for items which would afterwards be the property of the Corporation.<sup>(13)</sup> After the Corporation had found money to complete the project, gas lighting was inaugurated in March 1834, six months later than had been intended.<sup>(14)</sup> It remained a subject of political discord and after a heated meeting, the Parish Vestry, swayed by a majority of reformers, decided not to use gas lighting in St. James Church.<sup>(15)</sup> The supporters of reform in general, became the opponents of this improvement in the town.

The building of a bridge to link Poole with Hamworthy across one of the reaches of the harbour resulted in even greater controversy. The proposal, first made in 1824, had considerable merits. It would end the comparative isolation of the town by placing it on a thoroughfare and would considerably shorten the journey to Wareham, the next town of any size in the county. It would also relieve the Corporation of the irksome responsibility for the Hamworthy ferry. It seems likely that the proposal originated from, or was quickly taken up by W.F.S. Ponsonby.<sup>(16)</sup> In 1833 his land steward, a Dissenting banker and reform supporter in Poole, started a company to build a bridge.<sup>(17)</sup> Initially the Corporation supported the proposal.<sup>(18)</sup> Five days later the Tory majority changed their minds and refused to subscribe to it.<sup>(19)</sup> Then, when the projectors were preparing to secure a private act, the Corporation came out resolutely against the bridge project. They would only accept it if expensive and large scale works were undertaken in the harbour to safeguard its channels from the danger of silting they alleged the bridge would cause. They also demanded that the outlying suburbs should be united with the Parish of St. James for the purpose of poor rating.<sup>(20)</sup>

To an extent the Corporation's attitude can be defended. They were naturally sensitive about any potential threat to the utility of the harbour. They were also concerned that the building of a bridge would encourage more of the town's residents to move out into the suburbs to escape the poor rates in St. James Parish. However, their prime motive was undoubtedly political. A bridge sponsored by Ponsonby would not only bring him favour - it would enable him to exercise closer control over his tenants in Hamworthy. Moreover, some of their enemies, including the Whig Rector of St. James and the radical Deacon of the Congregational Church, opposed both the bridge and the union of the parishes.<sup>(21)</sup> The Tories hoped to make political capital out of this division in the ranks of their opponents. They therefore ignored the engineer's report that the bridge would be no danger to the harbour<sup>(22)</sup> and demanded harbour works they knew the sponsors of the bridge could not undertake.

In spite of the divisions amongst those who normally supported Ponsonby, and the Corporation's efforts in the Commons to defeat it, the Bill passed without amendment.<sup>(23)</sup> Although the Corporation had cut its losses and had not opposed the Bill in the Lords, it was now faced with a bill of over £1,200 for the Town Clerk's expenses in preparing its case. They paid it by raiding the Quay Fund, accumulated from the harbour dues.<sup>(24)</sup> Thus, in the end it was the opponents of the Corporation who were able to make political capital out of the issue. The Corporation's behaviour in spending so much to oppose a project they had originally approved was ridiculed. Accusations of jobbery which had been made over the gas lighting issue were now reinforced by charges against the manner used to pay the Town Clerk's bill.<sup>(25)</sup>

Two important improvements were thus secured for the town. The political controversy they aroused meant that one was delayed and the other made far more expensive than it needed to be. The Corporation emerged with little credit from either episode.

#### The Corporation and the Politics of Religion

The increasing bitterness of sectarian differences in Poole during the early 1830s supports Professor Gash's comment that "to a large extent religion was itself a species of politics".<sup>(26)</sup>

The town had been influenced by the general revival of interest in church building and the provision of church schools in the first quarter of the 19th century.<sup>(27)</sup> The Corporation contributed £1,300 to the rebuilding of St. James Church in 1819-21.<sup>(28)</sup> It also provided some assistance for the erection of a new church in Hamworthy in 1825, sponsored by Ponsonby, and a further new church for the residents of the suburbs of Longfleet and Parkstone, which Ponsonby also initiated.<sup>(29)</sup> Following the success of the Lancastrian school founded by the Dissenters in 1812,<sup>(30)</sup> plans were made in the 1820s for a National School, which was eventually opened in 1835 as a replacement for the Free School previously maintained by the Corporation.<sup>(31)</sup>

By 1830 however, there were clear symptoms of political rivalry in the attitude of some of the supporters of the Anglican Church in the Corporation. They were hostile to the Rector of St. James, the Rev. P.W. Jolliffe, because of his Whig politics and tolerant attitude to the Dissenters. They were jealous too of Ponsonby's success in fostering the building of new churches. In 1830 George Welch Ledgard, Slade's predecessor as the leader of the Tory interest, took the lead in a proposal to build an additional church in Poole to serve as a chapel of

ease for the Parish of St. James.<sup>(32)</sup> This was justified because of the increase in the town's population but was in part aimed at reducing the status of the Rev. Jolliffe. The proposal aroused much controversy. It was evidently opposed by Jolliffe and the construction of the new church, St. Pauls, was delayed for over a year.<sup>(33)</sup> Once it was finished there was further controversy over the Bishop of Bristol's plan to assign a new district for it. Jolliffe and his many supporters protested that this action would be "inimical to the Incumbent, his congregation and the inhabitants at large".<sup>(34)</sup> Although he was supported on this occasion by the majority of the Corporation, the Bishop, presumably with Ledgard's backing, insisted on creating the new district for the church.<sup>(35)</sup>

Ledgard's example was soon followed by two other Tory burgesses, Robert Parr, the Town Clerk, and his brother. They sponsored a new church at Parkstone. Although this was justified because it had a more convenient location than the new church Ponsonby was building, it was evidently designed as a rival to Ponsonby's church and as a counter to his territorial influence.<sup>(36)</sup> The Corporation did not intervene in 1834 when the Bishop of Bristol's apportionment of the respective districts of these two new churches left Ponsonby's at a disadvantage to its rival.<sup>(37)</sup> While allowance must be made for sincerely felt religious beliefs (and it is likely that Ledgard and the Parrs had high church views) their concern in the provision of new churches was prompted very much by political considerations.

By 1834 the future of the established church was becoming a major issue in British politics. The Dissenters added their demands for equality with the Anglican Church to the demands of radicals that it should be drastically reformed.<sup>(38)</sup> The existence in Poole of such a large number of Dissenters - approximately half the population - their support for parliamentary reform, their relationship with Ponsonby and their demands for an end to their remaining disabilities meant that there would inevitably be bitter sectarian disputes between them and the Tories dominating the Corporation.

Early in 1834 the Poole Dissenters, like those elsewhere, adopted petitions seeking freedom to hold their own marriage services, bury their dead in parish cemeteries, register the births of their children, gain admission to the universities and obtain freedom from Church rates.<sup>(39)</sup> Ledgard headed the opposition to these demands in the town and the Town Clerk intervened in the Parish Vestry to ensure that the Churchwardens and other officers were chosen from Tory members of the Corporation who

could be depended upon to join in opposing the Dissenters' demands.<sup>(40)</sup> Disputes over these elections and the legal expenses they entailed further inflamed feelings against the Corporation not only amongst the Dissenters but also amongst those members of the Anglican Church who opposed the Tory majority in the Corporation, and were willing to see concessions made to the Dissenters.<sup>(41)</sup>

The controversy in the Vestry reached its height in 1835. In April, a majority was obtained for the election of reformers as churchwardens, presumably with the aid of the Dissenters. The Vestry then decided to suspend the payment of 'singers and bell-ringers' as a gesture towards the Dissenters' objections to paying Church rates.<sup>(42)</sup> A private and 'patriotic' subscription raised by the Tories for the ringing of the bells on the King's birthday caused a further storm,<sup>(43)</sup> which soon became merged in a controversy over the fencing of the churchyard. This ended in victory for the Corporation's representatives in the Vestry who were able to reverse the earlier decision against fencing which the Dissenters and the reformers had carried.<sup>(44)</sup>

In the meantime, the Corporation had emphasised its attachment to the established church by referring to the threats it had faced from the late Whig administration in its address to William IV congratulating him on the dismissal of Melbourne.<sup>(45)</sup> At the same time the Tories organised an address allegedly signed by 900 of the town's inhabitants in which the same sentiments were prominent.<sup>(46)</sup>

The implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1835 resulted in further political and sectarian controversy. The Tories won the elections for the Guardians in the Poole Union, taking 8 seats, including all of those allocated to St. James Parish.<sup>(47)</sup> Parr, the Town Clerk, now became the Guardians' Clerk, and 1835 ended with bitter complaints that the Guardians were preventing Dissenting Ministers from visiting the Poor House.<sup>(48)</sup> The Salisbury Journal noted in 1835 that "the Tories have declared they will let no public matter pass unopposed until they have succeeded in establishing their power in the town".<sup>(49)</sup> They obviously wished to make the Parish Vestry and the Board of Guardians further bastions of this power with an eye to the future elections for the Town Council.

It has been suggested that it was in the period following the Municipal Reform Act, rather than the Reform Act of 1832, that "a real revolution in the social background of government" resulted in pitched battles between Dissenters and "the remnants of old oligarchy".<sup>(50)</sup> This was true of Leicester after 1835.<sup>(51)</sup> The history of conflict elsewhere

shows that in certain circumstances bitter struggles took place before the coming of municipal reform. For example, in Leeds the conflict between the strongly Anglican and Tory Corporation and the Dissenters resulted in struggles between them in the parish vestry starting in 1815.<sup>(52)</sup> Because the divisions between Anglicans and Dissenters in Poole were not as pronounced as they were in Leeds at this earlier date, it was not until after the Reform Act that the battle between them started in earnest. The struggle in Poole came before the coming of municipal reform because the Tories felt themselves threatened by the large number of Dissenters in the town who were allied to the powerful manorial interest they were determined to resist.

#### The Corporation and Municipal Reform

Despite the political and sectarian conflicts of these years the achievement of parliamentary reform was not followed directly by demands for municipal reform from the supporters of the reformers in Poole, as happened for example in Leicester.<sup>(53)</sup> It did not apparently emerge as a clear issue in the town until the by-election of May 1835, when the Whig candidate won great applause for his promise to support the forthcoming Municipal Corporations Bill.<sup>(54)</sup>

It is possible that the reform party, weakened by the loss of the leadership in the Corporation previously supplied by Garland's interest, had too many demands on their time and energy, resulting from the many disputes they were engaged in, to develop their thoughts on municipal reform. It is more likely that the reformers were initially satisfied by the manner in which the Reform Act had settled the main question between the inhabitants and the Corporation - the parliamentary franchise. Their success in the general election of 1832 in returning two Whig members confirmed their satisfaction. Moreover, there were important differences between the state of affairs in Leicester and Poole. Leicester Corporation had remained an exclusive body: Poole Corporation had widened its membership considerably. Leicester Corporation had stoutly opposed parliamentary reform whereas Poole Corporation had supported it. Leicester "had advanced some distance in the transition from a country to an industrial town".<sup>(55)</sup> Industry in Poole had made comparatively little progress and both the middle and lower classes were less numerous and vociferous than those in Leicester.

The establishment of the Royal Commission to investigate the corporations in 1833 appears to have passed without comment in Poole and both the conservative and liberal local newspapers noted the lack of interest shown in the Commissioner's visit to Poole early in 1834.<sup>(56)</sup> At least two of the reform supporters amongst the burgesses assisted the

Corporation Committee to prepare answers to the Commissioner's questions and at this stage there is no evidence that the reformers used the inquiry to voice serious criticisms of the Corporation.<sup>(57)</sup> At this time the bridge controversy and the conflict in the Parish Vestry had not properly developed.

The Corporation itself adopted a realistic attitude towards the Commission. Some of the more extreme Tories questioned its legality, an issue that was raised nationally,<sup>(58)</sup> but the majority did not wish to behave as Leicester Corporation and four other corporations did in refusing all co-operation with the Commission.<sup>(59)</sup> By accident or design the Corporation Committee responsible made ready written answers to the specific questions, instead of preparing to give evidence on oath. Gambier, the Commissioner, pointed out that this was an unusual procedure but agreed to accept the statements with supplementary oral explanations.<sup>(60)</sup> He may well have had personal reasons for agreeing to this procedure since he was to be a candidate for the Recordership of the Borough in the following July and would not have wished to offend any members of the Corporation.<sup>(61)</sup> He received a comprehensive and almost completely accurate factual statement about the Corporation's constitution and functions.<sup>(62)</sup>

His report on the Corporation<sup>(63)</sup> drew very heavily on the answers provided for him and contained very little criticism of it. He noted a possible abuse of power by the Town Clerk, acting as Prothonotary of the Court of Record, and the difficulties of ensuring an adequate number of competent officers of the Corporation because of the requirement that officers should live within the boundaries of the Borough.<sup>(64)</sup> However, while he suggested a relaxation of this rule and the desirability of extending the criminal jurisdiction of the Borough Magistrates over the new suburbs, he stopped short of recommending a full extension of the municipal boundaries to incorporate the suburbs.<sup>(65)</sup> It is again possible that he was influenced by the prospect of becoming Recorder of Poole and did not therefore make a recommendation that would have been unpopular with the majority of the Corporation. If this was so, it was an example of a different form of bias on the part of the Municipal Corporations Commissioners, who were accused of bias against corporations in their conduct on their visits to investigate the Corporations of Coventry and Leicester.<sup>(66)</sup> Despite the absence of any pronounced criticism of Poole Corporation in his report, the Corporation was not included however in the small number of corporations which the Commissioners praised "as turning their attention to their municipal duties more sedulously than the majority".<sup>(67)</sup>

By the time that the Municipal Reform Bill was published in 1835 the political and sectarian divisions in national politics had become more acute.<sup>(68)</sup> In Poole, the gulf between the majority of the Corporation and their opponents had widened. Their differences had been fought out in the two parliamentary election campaigns in the town in 1835. The Corporation divided on party lines in its response to the Bill. The majority insisted on the appointment of a committee (of Tory members) to watch over its progress and establish a deputation to meet representatives of other corporations in London. The deputation was "to co-operate with them in such measures as may be deemed necessary for the benefit of this Borough".<sup>(69)</sup> The opposition amendments condemning attempts to obstruct the Bill as "unjust and absurd", and denouncing "the wanton and wasteful expenditure of funds which are shortly to be delivered over to other Trustees" were voted down by 26 to 16 and 20 to 15 votes respectively.<sup>(70)</sup>

On 1st July, 1835, the Committee reported that the Town Clerk's visit to London showed that it was desirable for the Corporation to petition the House of Lords and seek permission to give evidence there.<sup>(71)</sup> The petition prepared was adopted by 42 votes to 6 since most of the reformers boycotted the meeting. It declared that the Corporation was willing to accept reform but condemned the proposals regarding freemen, annual elections and triennial tenure, the extension of the municipal boundary to include the parliamentary district, the prospect of Dissenters controlling ecclesiastical patronage and the loss of Admiralty jurisdiction. It also sought to substitute either a weighted ratepayer franchise or the parliamentary franchise for the ratepayer franchise proposed for municipal elections. The Burgesses, it said, "were not aware of the slightest charge ever having been brought against them".<sup>(72)</sup> The Corporation was clearly willing to accept only a very limited measure of reform.

The opposing parties now took up the issue outside the Corporation. The reformers petitioned the Lords in July, claiming that they had secured the signatures of 550 of the 700 parliamentary electors in Poole.<sup>(73)</sup> In August they sent up a second petition "humbly praying that it may please your Lordships not to procrastinate by the intervention of interested parties, a measure, on the passing of which unimpaired into a Law your Petitioners firmly believe, the happiness and well-being of the Community to depend".<sup>(74)</sup> The supporters of the Corporation may have encountered difficulties in organising their petitions because it was not until after the Poole deputation had been heard in the Lords in August that their first petition, against the boundary extensions, was sent up.<sup>(75)</sup>

At the end of the month they claimed 900 signatures for a second petition seeking the acceptance by the Commons of the amendments made by the Lords.<sup>(76)</sup> Their opponents countered by claiming that the petition had been hawked from door to door, taken to "the lowest pot-houses in the place" and that those signing it had received "copious supplies of spirits as a bonus".<sup>(77)</sup>

Evidence for the Corporation in the Lords was given by one burgess and one ratepayer. Neither had a very comfortable time. Wellington took some interest in the proceedings but Brougham and Strafford (until recently Sir John Byng, the Whig member for Poole) asked very pointed questions. Joseph Barter, the burgess, was forced to admit the heavy expenditure made by the Corporation in opposing the Bridge Bill. Billows, an ironmonger chosen to represent the ratepayers, was compelled to make it clear that the Corporation enjoyed exclusive membership of the Quay Committee, whose funds had been used to defray the expenses in the bridge episode.<sup>(78)</sup>

The passing of the Municipal Reform Act caused an understandably mixed reaction in the town. The reformers welcomed it, but were disgusted by the concessions made by Melbourne to the Tory resistance in the Lords on the rights of the freemen, ecclesiastical patronage and the limitations on ratepayer democracy, such as the provision for aldermen.<sup>(79)</sup>

The supporters of the Corporation took some consolation from these concessions and realistically prepared for the municipal elections. One of their principal concerns was the greatly enlarged municipal area. The extension of the town's boundaries to those of the parliamentary district would mean that large areas under Ponsonby's influence would be included in it. They were already aware of his influence in these areas in parliamentary elections. While they had been pleased to accept the Poor Law Union incorporating the outlying areas with the old town for the purpose of the poor rate, the full merger of these areas for municipal government was likely to mean that municipal reform in Poole would indeed be "a smasher of local Toryism".<sup>(80)</sup>

Their fears of the consequences of the extension of the Borough were more than just a matter of party politics however. The inclusion of the rural area would, they feared, create a conflict between the agricultural interest of the outlying district and the commercial interest of the town. The Corporation had argued that one great advantage of the old order was that "Government is vested in men who are connected with the interests of the Port, who are mercantile men principally".<sup>(81)</sup> Naturally, there was special pleading here, since merchants resident in the outlying district would enjoy the municipal franchise and could become councillors.



But there was some justification for their fears that the strength of the mercantile interest would be diluted. Approximately 25% of the parliamentary electors in the outlying areas were farmers or were qualified because they possessed "house and land".<sup>(82)</sup> The suburb of Parkstone in particular was beginning to attract retired residents from other parts of the country who were unlikely to have any close interest in the management of the port.<sup>(83)</sup>

The dominant merchant interest in the Corporation felt itself threatened also by the ratepayer franchise, of which their opponents naturally had high hopes.<sup>(84)</sup> An examination of the social background of the leading men amongst the Tory defenders of the Corporation and the reform party shows that the future of the power of merchant interest in municipal government was a real issue in the struggle over municipal reform in Poole. Of the 18 Conservative<sup>(85)</sup> candidates in the first municipal election under the 1835 Act held in December 1835, no fewer than 13 may be classed as merchants, and they were joined by a ropemaker and 2 bankers. 5 of the merchants belonged to the Slade family who continued in the Newfoundland trade. In contrast, the 18 reformers included only 5 men who could be regarded as merchants, and only one of them had any real connection with the Newfoundland trade. The remainder of their candidates came from a wide range of occupations and included a surgeon, a corn-dealer and 7 men from more humble reaches of society: a confectioner, 2 tanners, a draper, a chemist, a carrier and a clockmaker.<sup>(86)</sup> The virtual disappearance of the Garland family and its merchant associates from the political life of the town and the aspirations of the respectable householders and the Dissenters had combined to make the reform party clearly recognisable as representative of a generally inferior social group in the town. They were not hostile to the commercial interests of the port but unwilling to accept the continuation of the rule of the merchant elite. With local variations, the conflict between them was one of the basic issues raised by municipal reform: the struggle between the old corporations of varying exclusiveness and selfishness and the reformers with their hopes that the new town councils would be "associations of residents, linked by the bond of neighbourhood, for the purpose of promoting the common interest of all".<sup>(87)</sup>

#### The End of the Old Corporation

In the manner in which it arranged its affairs before its demise, the Corporation did not behave as decorously as Southampton Corporation,<sup>(88)</sup> but yet not quite so defiantly as the Corporation of Leicester.<sup>(89)</sup> Individual members let their partisan feelings run away with them and implied that "care would be taken that none of the Corporation property should

pass into the hands of their successors" as the hostile Salisbury Journal reported.<sup>(90)</sup> There were traces of this attitude in the Corporation's decision at its last meeting to sell the Corporation plate and present suitable plate to St. James Church with the proceeds of the sale.<sup>(91)</sup> Yet this action can be defended, and compares favourably with the cruder gestures of Leicester Corporation in proffering gifts of money and plate to its friends.<sup>(92)</sup>

Another decision of the Corporation, in October 1835, caused a controversy which was to figure for a long time in the disputes in the new town council. This was the Corporation's agreement to refund the admission fees paid for some 25 minors who had been created burgesses in 1830 but who could not now be formally re-admitted to the Corporation when they came of age.<sup>(93)</sup> The decision to refund a total of £800 to amongst others, Robert Slade, the Mayor, who had three children amongst the minors, was shortly followed by the payment of £300 to the Town Clerk for his work in opposing the Municipal Reform Bill.<sup>(94)</sup> The reformers were up in arms at what they saw as further proof of the wasteful irresponsibility of the Corporation.<sup>(95)</sup> When the Corporation ignored a protest made by 8 of the opposition members, the reformers consulted the Attorney General but his advice that an injunction might be sought against the Corporation's action was not followed, presumably because preparations for the impending municipal election took priority.<sup>(96)</sup> The Corporation refunded the admission fees, undeterred by the clamour and convinced of its rectitude in honouring what it regarded as a contract with the sponsors of the minors.

It was fitting that only 17 of the 90 burgesses attended the last meeting of the Corporation on 2nd December, 1835.<sup>(97)</sup> The Corporation had always been an oligarchy and despite its wider membership, had been more oligarchical in its conduct since the end of the period of political compromise in 1831. In its very last years the impact of reform had made the dominant mercantile interest more exclusive in their attitude to the householders of both the old town and the new district and the Dissenters. As they became more partisan in their attitude their conduct of municipal government was sometimes irresponsible, as the Bridge affair shows in particular. Like other corporations under pressure it did "silly things" in its anxiety to defend itself.<sup>(98)</sup> However, its opponents were also guilty of irresponsibility. They contributed to the political rancour which marred the two major improvements in the town at this time.

In its last years the Corporation and its opponents were caught up in the controversies and divisions in society and politics which followed the passage of the 1832 Reform Act.<sup>(99)</sup> Even the one reform on which the majority of the Corporation and their adversaries found some common ground, the reform of the Poor Law, became a matter of contention because of the intrusion of political and sectarian jealousies.

Despite its partisan attitude in its final years the Corporation retained some merit, as the Municipal Corporations Commissioner's report indicated. After the widening of its membership in 1830, and the coming of parliamentary reform, its previous critics appear to have been broadly satisfied with its administration of the town until 1834, when political and sectarian controversies coloured virtually every aspect of municipal life.

The opposition of the majority of the Corporation to municipal reform in 1835 was naturally based partly on prejudice. The leaders of the Corporation, the Slade family of Newfoundland merchants, so clearly representative of the old order of society and politics in the town, made a powerful appeal to the nostalgic longings of the burgesses who followed them. It is possible that they might have achieved more administrative reforms and thus overcome some of the problems in local government but they had no answer to the basic problem posed by the expansion of the town into the suburbs because they were opposed to the extension of the municipal boundaries. Nevertheless, their hostility to the 1835 Act was based on reason as well as prejudice. Their case against the measure was well prepared and echoed many of the arguments used by critics of the Bill in Parliament.<sup>(100)</sup> In view of the dangers which the merchant elite saw pressing in upon them at this time their reaction to municipal reform was logical. They were confronted by the rise of new threats to their influence from the Lord of the Manor, the consequences of parliamentary reform and the collapse of the town's staple trade. The physical growth of the town and the need for an adjustment of its boundaries presented further fundamental problems of change to them. In the same way that the Slades were employing their determination and resourcefulness to overcome their commercial difficulties and salvage what they could of the Newfoundland trade, they and their supporters were equally determined and resourceful in resisting the reform of the Corporation prescribed in Parliament as long as they could. Having themselves reformed the Corporation in the earlier 19th century they understandably failed to see the need for further reform imposed on them from outside.

1. Chapter 9, p. 242.
2. S.J., 27th February, 1832; Dorset County Chronicle, 22nd February, 1st March, 1832.
3. Norman Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, a Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation 1830-1850, (1953), pp. 240-1.
4. Rev. W.B. Clarke, Pamphlet on the January 1835 election quoted by W. Mate, Then and Now or Fifty Years Ago, pp. 118-9.
5. P. Perry, 'The Newfoundland Trade, the Decline and Demise of the Port of Poole 1815-1894', The American Neptune, (October, 1968), p. 279; H. Innis, The Cod Fisheries: the History of an International Economy, (Yale University Press, 1940, revised edition, Toronto, 1954), pp. 400, n.67, 412, n.96.
6. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 38, B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 8th February, 1833.
7. Ibid; J.G. Garland to Deborah Garland, 23rd April, 1833; D. Beamish, J. Hillier and H.F.V. Johnstone, Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset, Vol.I, pp. 114-119.
8. P.B.A., Corporation Monthly Meeting Book 1813-1835, 24th July, 1833.
9. Ibid, 23rd July, 1834; S.J., 28th July, 1834.
10. B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 26th February, 1833.
11. S.J., 25th February, 1833.
12. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 3rd July, 2nd, 21st August, 6th, 14th November, 1833; B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 16th October, 1833.
13. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 1st January, 21st February, 1834.
14. Ibid, 4th March, 1834; S.J., 17th March, 1834.
15. S.J., 7th April, 1834.
16. Ibid, 4th October, 1824, 14th November, 1825.
17. Ibid, 21st October, 1833; Dorset County Chronicle, 24th October, 1833.
18. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 10th February, 1834.
19. Ibid, 15th February, 1834.
20. Ibid, 19th March, 1834.
21. S.J., 10th March, 1834; Mate, op. cit., pp. 128-9.
22. S.J., 14th April, 1834.
23. Ibid, 12th May, 1834. Sir John Byng, one of the Borough's Whig members was Chairman of the Commons Committee on the Bill and assisted its easy passage.

24. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 4th June, 2nd July, 6th August, 3rd September, 1834.
25. Mate, op. cit., p. 129; Printed Handbill, 'A New Burgess', 14th October, 1835.
26. Gash, op. cit., p. 175.
27. G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, pp. 154-6, 173-6.
28. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 12th February, 1819, 5th July, 1820, 4th April, 1821.
29. Ibid, 7th September, 1825, 12th November, 1828.
30. S.J., 13th April, 3rd August, 1812.
31. Ibid, 12th September, 1825, 8th September, 13th October, 1834, 30th March, 1835; Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 3rd, 17th September, 1st October, 1834.
32. S.J., 15th August, 1831, 14th May, 1832.
33. H. Lawrence Phillips, Poole Church and its Rectors, (Poole, 1915), p.62.
34. Ibid.
35. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 2nd, 5th January, 1833; S.J., 21st January, 1833.
36. Dorset County Chronicle, 3rd October, 1833.
37. Ibid, 4th September, 1834.
38. N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-1852, (Oxford, 1965), pp. 60-70.
39. S.J., 27th January, 3rd, 17th, 24th February, 1834; Dorset County Chronicle, 30th January, 27th February, 1834.
40. Dorset County Chronicle, 13th February, 1834; S.J., 3rd February, 1834; B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 21st July, 1834.
41. S.J., 21st May, 1834.
42. Ibid, 29th April, 1835.
43. Ibid, 8th June, 1835; Dorset County Chronicle, 4th, 11th June, 1835.
44. S.J., 22nd, 29th June, 1835.
45. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 24th November, 1834.
46. S.J., 1st, 8th December, 1834; Dorset County Chronicle, 27th November, 4th December, 1834.
47. S.J., 5th October, 1835; Dorset County Chronicle, 8th October, 1835.
48. S.J., 30th November, 7th December, 1835.
49. Ibid, 12th October, 1835.
50. Kitson Clark, op. cit., pp. 161-2.
51. A. Temple Patterson, Radical Leicester, a History of Leicester 1780-1850, pp. 247-55.
52. R.G. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants: the Merchant Community in Leeds 1700-1830, pp. 174-5.

53. Patterson, op. cit., pp. 198-201.
54. S.J., 25th May, 1835; Dorset County Chronicle, 21st May, 1835.
55. Patterson, op. cit., p. 166.
56. Dorset County Chronicle, 30th January, 1834; S.J., 27th January, 1834.
57. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 18th, 20-21st January, 1834.
58. Dorset County Chronicle, 30th January, 1834; G.B.A.M. Finlayson, 'The Municipal Corporation Commission and Report 1833-5', B.I.H.R., 36, (1963), pp. 36-52.
59. Patterson, op. cit., pp. 201-4; P.P., XXIII, 116, (1835), First Report of the Municipal Corporations Commissioners, p. 15.
60. Dorset County Chronicle, 30th January, 1834.
61. S.J., 28th July, 1834.
62. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., January 1834, Answers to the Commissioners Questions.
63. P.P., XXIV, 116, (1835), Appendix to the First Report of the Municipal Corporations Commissioners, Part II, pp. 1317-28.
64. Ibid, pp. 1323, 1328.
65. Ibid, p. 1328.
66. Finlayson, op. cit., p. 47.
67. P.P., XXIII, op. cit., p. 34.
68. D. Close, 'The Rise of the Conservatives in the Age of Reform', B.I.H.R., XLV, (1972), pp. 89-103.
69. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 24th June, 1835.
70. S.J., 29th June, 1835.
71. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 1st July, 1835; House of Lords Journals, LXVII, p. 332, 30th July, 1835.
72. Ibid, 29th July, 1835; Dorset County Chronicle, 30th July, 1835.
73. Dorset County Chronicle, 30th July, 1835; House of Lords Journals, LXVII, p. 317, 23rd July.
74. S.J., 10th, 17th August, 1835; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, Public Meeting, 5th August, 1835.
75. Dorset County Chronicle, 20th August, 1835; House of Lords Journals, LXVII, p. 562, 17th August, 1835.
76. Dorset County Chronicle, 27th August, 3rd September, 1835.
77. S.J., 31st August, 1835.
78. House of Lords Journals, LXVII, p. 499, 7th August, 1835; Dorset County Chronicle, 13th August, 1835; Mate, op. cit., p. 130.
79. S.J., 24th August, 1835; G.B.A.M. Finlayson, 'The Politics of Municipal Reform 1835', E.H.R., Vol.LXXXL, (1966), pp. 673-692.
80. Joseph Parkes to Stanley, 11th October, 1835, quoted by Finlayson, 'The Politics of Municipal Reform', op. cit., p. 688.

81. House of Lords Journals, LXVII, p. 499, op. cit.
82. P.B.A., Electoral Register 1838-1839.
83. See the Salisbury Journal, 24th March and 20th October, 1834 for advertisements of property and a description of the development of Parkstone.
84. Ibid, 9th November, 1835.
85. A Conservative Association was formed in Poole in June 1835 and thereafter the term Conservative was normally used. However, various terms continued in use for their opponents - 'Liberals', 'Reformers', 'Radicals'.
86. P.B.A. Corporation Record Book 1816-1835, 28th December, 1835; S.J., 4th January, 1836.
87. Patterson, op. cit., pp. 212-3.
88. A. Temple Patterson, A History of Southampton 1700-1914, Vol.I, p. 177.
89. Patterson, Radical Leicester, op. cit., p. 214.
90. S.J., 26th October, 1835.
91. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 2nd December, 1835.
92. Patterson, Radical Leicester, op. cit., p. 214.
93. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 21st October, 1835.
94. Ibid, 4th November, 1835.
95. S.J., 26th October, 9th, 16th November, 1835.
96. P.B.A., Corporation Book of Opinions 1830-1845, ff. 7-11, 31st October, 1835.
97. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, op. cit., 2nd December, 1835.
98. Kitson Clark, op. cit., p. 160.
99. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction, op. cit., pp. 1-2.
100. Finlayson, 'The Politics of Municipal Reform', op. cit., pp. 681-3.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### POOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL 1836-c.1840

For the majority of the 178 municipal boroughs which came within the terms of the Municipal Reform Act the most significant immediate result of the measure was the replacement of the old and usually oligarchic corporations by town councils elected on a standard pattern. The Act itself, as Lord Briggs has pointed out, "paid relatively little attention to functions",<sup>(1)</sup> and the extent to which the new councils provided improved local government services depended on local circumstances and initiative for many years after 1835. Only gradually did national legislation, such as the series of Nuisance Removal Acts beginning in 1846 or the Public Health Act of 1848, encourage or require the municipal authorities to improve or extend their services.

The Webbs, in their monumental study of local government, admitted the many defects of the hurried measure of municipal reform but concluded that it "amounted to a Municipal Revolution".<sup>(2)</sup> Inasmuch as it is fitting to use this term to describe the shorter term effects of the 1835 Act, it must be limited to describing the transfer of power from those who had enjoyed membership of the old corporations to men and interests which had been previously wholly or partly excluded from a share in the control of local government. Even here, although the present state of research presents some difficulties to arriving at an accurate generalisation, the term 'revolution' may well be a slight exaggeration because of the apparently sizeable minority of boroughs in which the first municipal elections had only limited effects on the political complexion of the controlling group and/or the social composition of the town council. The Tories retained control of Southampton Council until 1847 and about half of the previous members of the old Corporation were returned in 1835.<sup>(3)</sup> In Exeter too, Liberal control was not achieved until 1837, and then only temporarily.<sup>(4)</sup> It was only gradually that "the respectable members of city society" withdrew from local political activity in the city.<sup>(5)</sup> Only 9 members of Nottingham Corporation were elected to the new council but "the composition of the old and new corporations was similar in occupations, religious affiliations, and political convictions".<sup>(6)</sup> The Liberals gained control of Liverpool Council but their leaders "were men who in their everyday lives and their social outlook were similar to the Old Council".<sup>(7)</sup> In Plymouth many members of the old corporation were elected to the new council "and there was also no break in administration."<sup>(8)</sup>



Despite the need for caution in employing the term 'revolution' in assessing the immediate effects of the 1835 Act on the composition of all town councils, it is nevertheless true that the majority were captured by the Whigs<sup>(9)</sup> and their 'reform' or 'liberal' supporters and that irrespective of the politics of the victorious party a definite change took place in the social composition of the councils. Thus an increasing number of Dissenters became councillors or aldermen, not only in boroughs like Leicester, where only 4 Tories were returned amongst the 42 councillors,<sup>(10)</sup> or in Leeds, where a similar dramatic change took place in party control,<sup>(11)</sup> but also in those towns, such as Southampton<sup>(12)</sup> and Exeter,<sup>(13)</sup> where change was more gradual. Partly linked with this development was the election to the borough councils of more individuals lower in the social scale than many of their predecessors in the former corporations,<sup>(14)</sup> and Professor Hennock has demonstrated that by the 1850s there was widespread feeling that the personnel of town councils had declined considerably both in social status and quality.<sup>(15)</sup>

When we place the first years of the 'reformed' Borough Council of Poole against this background we naturally find that in some ways its early history bears out the truth of the generalisations made above. There was much continuity in personnel; the new Council achieved comparatively little improvement in the functions it performed. On the other hand, it will be shown that the experience of this Borough was exceptional in many respects. Bitter political and sectarian feelings ran to extremes in some boroughs in the 1830s and 1840s, as Professor Temple Patterson has notably demonstrated in his study of Leicester,<sup>(16)</sup> but the Borough of Poole had the particular disgrace of seeing a bill to annul the first municipal elections pass through the Commons, became involved in a tangle of complex and expensive law suits, suffered the final indignity of having all its property seized by officers of the High Court in 1839, and was so distracted that it could not respond adequately to the needs of the community for many years after 1835.

#### The First Municipal Election

The first municipal election in the Borough, held on 26th December, 1835, was fought on strictly party lines. The rancorous partisan feeling in the town which had marked the last two years of the old Corporation and the passage of the Municipal Reform Act, and the increasing political divisions in national politics had resulted in the formal organisation of the two parties in Poole. Almost simultaneously, in June 1835, the Reformers or Liberals had formed a local branch of the Reform Association and the Conservatives had come together as a local Conservative Assoc-

iation.<sup>(17)</sup> The latter appears to have enjoyed the greater initial success in carrying the election of the Poor Law Guardians in October and claimed to have registered a majority of municipal voters when the Revising Barrister visited the town in the same month.<sup>(18)</sup>

The Borough was divided into two wards, each electing 9 councillors. The North West ward included the more genteel part of the old town, and the outlying district of Parkstone with a total of 215 voters. The South East ward included the remainder of the old town and the outlying districts of Hamworthy and Longfleet and contained 168 voters after the final revision of the burgess list in December, 1835.<sup>(19)</sup>

Before the end of October the Reformers published what they optimistically termed "the names of 18 individuals selected to form our town council", and, after attacking their opponents' "hole and corner" selection meeting the Conservatives nominated their candidates.<sup>(20)</sup> The Reformers' candidates included 10 former members of the Corporation, 9 known Churchmen and 8 Dissenters. In contrast only 2 of the Conservatives had not belonged to the old Corporation and all of them were members of the Church. A similar, although less exact contrast, can be made between the social standing of the candidates. The Conservatives in general were men of higher social status in the town than their opponents.<sup>(21)</sup>

The Liberal's strongest hopes of success lay in the South East Ward which included the poorer parts of the old town and the suburbs of Hamworthy and Longfleet, which were less genteel than the suburb of Parkstone and were open to the influence of the Whig Lord of the Manor, W.F.S. Ponsonby, who owned much of the land in these outlying districts.

The North West ward, including as it did two of the more desirable streets in the old town and the suburb of Parkstone was much less hopeful territory for them. Parkstone, although more thinly populated than the other outlying districts, was largely outside the influence of the Lord of the Manor. Both the Slades, the leading Conservative family, and the family of the then Town Clerk, Robert Henning Parr, the wily adviser of the Conservatives, had obtained property and influence there. Moreover, Parkstone was beginning to attract respectable residents seeking pleasant retirement or leisure homes who were unlikely to sympathize with the aspirations of the reform party in Poole.<sup>(22)</sup> Nonetheless, the Liberals had to carry some of the seats in the North West ward to ensure a majority for themselves in the new council and significantly chose 3 of their most

respectable candidates to stand there: George Kemp, the doyen of the Poole Dissenters, and two ex-Mayors, William Jolliffe and James Seager, who belonged to old-established merchant families.

Both sides were assiduous in their preparation for the poll. To counter the possibility that the retiring Mayor, Robert Slade, the Returning Officer, and the Town Clerk would tamper with the voting papers the Liberals printed separately coloured papers, only to discover that the Conservatives had reprinted their papers to make them identical. Joseph Lankester, the Dissenting printer, was then forced to spend Christmas Day endorsing the Liberal supporters' papers so that they could be distinguished.<sup>(23)</sup> Canvassing and the completion and signing of voting papers meant that few voters were uncommitted and there was a high turn-out at the poll. Only 25 of the 215 voters registered in the North West ward did not vote (of whom 13 were absent at sea and 1 dead) while only 9 of the 168 electors in the South East ward failed to vote.<sup>(24)</sup> The results published on 28th December revealed a Conservative victory. They carried the North West ward by 89 to 71 votes and secured the election of two of their candidates in the other ward, George Major and George Ledgard. Three days later the Conservatives reinforced their majority of 4 votes on the Council by electing 6 Conservative Aldermen, who included two successful council candidates and 3 who had been unsuccessful.<sup>(25)</sup>

On the following day they continued to drive home their victory at the first full meeting of the Council when one of the Slade family was elected Mayor and another Slade chosen as Town Treasurer. The Watch Committee was appointed exclusively from their own ranks and Rober Parr, who it had already been rumoured wished to lose his office as Town Clerk so that he might be eligible for compensation under the Municipal Reform Act, was indeed replaced by another Conservative lawyer.<sup>(26)</sup> Later in January the Conservatives further consolidated their hold on the administration of the town by dismissing the Liberals who held the offices of Treasurer and Collector of the Quay Duties in favour of Conservative nominees and by reconstituting the Quay Committee without any Liberal members.<sup>(27)</sup>

The results of the first municipal election in Poole thus bear comparison with those observed in other boroughs in that there was a great deal of continuity in the personnel of the Councillors and Aldermen: all of the Councils' members had been burgesses of the old Corporation. On the other hand, the dismissal of officers and the partisan manner in

which the Council's most important Committees were filled meant that there was far less continuity in administration in Poole. In other boroughs where the reformers gained control of the new councils, such as Leicester, they followed up their triumph by purging the administration of the boroughs.<sup>(28)</sup> But the development in Poole was very different. Here a Conservative reaction resulted in a full application of the 'spoils system' where it had hitherto prevailed to a lesser extent.

The new Council was also less representative than its predecessor. The abolition of the office of burgess by the 1835 Act and the Conservative victory meant that there were now only 2 Dissenters on the Council, instead of the sizeable minority on the old Corporation. Since only 2 of the candidates from the more humble levels of society survived the election, the new Council as a whole was tilted more firmly towards the more respectable in society. In this respect the result of municipal reform in Poole was similar to that in Macclesfield where the new council included few of the previous burgesses drawn from the lower ranks of the community.<sup>(29)</sup> This particular consequence of the Municipal Reform Act also serves to underline the need for a less optimistic appraisal of the Act than many historians have given it in the past when they too readily assumed its democratic effects.<sup>(30)</sup>

It was the Conservative victory in Poole which helps to explain the points of comparison and contrast made above and this victory itself was not typical of the first municipal election results. The majority of the new councils were won by the reformers. As Professor Keith-Lucas pointed out, there are difficulties in ascertaining exactly which party won these elections because of conflicting newspaper reports.<sup>(31)</sup> For example, there are some errors in the list published by the Salisbury Journal which gives a total of only 15 Conservative victories against 91 for the Whigs and their supporters.<sup>(32)</sup> It is clear however that the Conservatives' success in Poole was a departure from the general pattern of these results. It was also markedly different in that generally the Conservative successes occurred where the previous corporation had been under Whig control.<sup>(33)</sup> The Conservatives had controlled Poole Corporation and had now won greater power in the Borough Council.

The reformers in Poole had no doubt that the Conservative success there was fraudulent and immediately set out to reverse it. Much of the misfortune which fell on the Borough Council and the community of Poole during the next 30 years stemmed from this disputed election.

The bone of contention was the return of 2 Conservative Councillors for the South East ward, which the Liberals had felt sure they would carry, and which enabled their opponents to seize control of the new Council. They alleged that the Mayor, in collusion with the then Town Clerk, had falsified the return for this ward by destroying 4 voting papers, mutilating 2 papers, and substituting fraudulent papers for 10 further electors.<sup>(34)</sup> Their suspicions heightened by what appeared to them to be obstructive tactics by the Town Clerk when they sought to examine the voting papers, they initiated the first of many legal actions which were to distract the town for many years.<sup>(35)</sup> This mandamus application was speedily followed by the commencement of quo warranto proceedings against Ledgard and Major, the two Conservative candidates returned for the South East ward, but by February 1836 the Liberals declared their intention to "apply for an Act of Parliament which no doubt ... will be passed without opposition".<sup>(36)</sup> This decision to seek a parliamentary remedy rather than a remedy through the courts stemmed in part from a desire to avoid the inevitable delays involved in a court action and their understanding that the Whig government would assist their cause in Parliament.<sup>(37)</sup>

Supported by the Borough's 2 Whig members, G.S. Byng and Charles Tulk, and by W.F.S. Ponsonby, one of the County members, the Burgesses' petition prompted a Commons motion for a Select Committee to inquire into the circumstances of the municipal elections, which was eventually passed by a majority of 118 on 3rd March, 1836.<sup>(38)</sup> This Committee included in effect 6 Whig members and 4 Tories, because Lord Stanley, although a member, attended none of the Committee's sessions. Meeting under the chairmanship of J.S. Poulter, the Radical M.P. for Shaftesbury, it spent 9 days examining 25 witnesses and made its report on 25th March.<sup>(39)</sup> The Committee found that the two Conservative candidates in the South East ward had been illegally and fraudulently returned but could not ascertain who had falsified and manipulated the voting papers, commenting that "so much of illegal or irregular practice seems to have prevailed during the course of the Municipal Elections as to deduct very considerably from the surprise which such singular frauds would be otherwise calculated to produce".<sup>(40)</sup> While some fraudulent activities on the part of the Liberals had been uncovered, and the evidence of one of their witnesses aroused some suspicions, in general the Liberal witnesses had made the best of their opportunities to condemn the activities of their opponents. In contrast, the Conservative witnesses, although receiving some assistance

from Lord Ashley, were in a weak position because they could not offer any satisfactory explanation for most of the irregularities.<sup>(41)</sup> In particular, the ex-Mayor, Robert Slade, showed up badly when challenged over the matter of putting questions to the voters at the poll and his method of counting the split votes.<sup>(42)</sup> The ex-Town Clerk, Parr, was understandably more skilled in defending himself under cross-examination, but even he was also sometimes embarrassed, notably over his dealing with one of his employees suspected of irregularities during the election.<sup>(43)</sup> The Committee's report also commented unfavourably on Parr's dismissal "with a view to the Compensation to be claimed under the Act of Parliament".<sup>(44)</sup>

The Liberals' joy at their success was completed by the final recommendation of the Committee that redress should be provided by an Act of Parliament because the quo warranto proceedings initiated could not be concluded before the 2 'illegal' Councillors would be due to retire from office.<sup>(45)</sup> Poulter immediately prepared a bill "For the voiding of the late Election of Councillors and other Corporate Officers for the Borough of Poole", which received its first reading on 20th April, 1836.<sup>(46)</sup> Delayed in part by petitions from Major and Ledgard, a second reading was not achieved until 11th May, when the Bill was sent to a Committee of the whole House which did not commence its work on the Bill until 7th July.<sup>(47)</sup> Tory amendments seeking to exclude the Councillors "not impugned in the proceedings" and to delete the clause voiding any bonds of compensation were defeated and on 28th July the Bill passed the Commons.<sup>(48)</sup> Introduced into the Lords on the same day, the Bill was effectively killed on 2nd August, when after receiving petitions from Major, Ledgard, the Council and the Inhabitants respectively, a second reading was postponed for three months.<sup>(49)</sup> Since Lyndhurst, who had spoken against the Bill, had claimed that he opposed it because the Lords had no evidence of the facts before them, a final attempt to persuade the Lords was made on 3rd August when the Select Committee's Report was brought to the House. This was fruitless for as the government's spokesman, the Duke of Richmond, noted, the opposition peers were virtually unanimously against the Bill.<sup>(50)</sup>

Having recovered from the shock of the 1832 Reform Act, the Lords were at this time engaged in wrecking many government measures and it is hardly surprising that they should have destroyed the Poole Corporation Bill, an offspring of the municipal reform they had so nearly blocked.<sup>(51)</sup>

However, the tactics pursued by the beleaguered Conservatives in Poole may have helped their cause too. Brushing aside the partial success of the Liberals in the quo warranto proceedings against the two offending Councillors,<sup>(52)</sup> the Council devised a strongly argued petition against the Corporation Bill, emphasizing in particular the returning officer's discretionary powers in the counting of votes, a point which Lord Redesdale was to stress in the Lords' debate.<sup>(53)</sup> This was backed by a petition from 500 inhabitants couched in much more simple terms. The Liberals alleged, with some justification, that there were fewer than 500 petitioners but they were slow to make this point and contented themselves with only one counter-petition.<sup>(54)</sup> They had indeed been understandably too complacent about the prospects of success.

However, the vindication of the Conservative control over the new Council was only in a limited sense a watershed in municipal affairs in the Borough. The Conservative's joy was unbounded and they celebrated with "a grand procession", dinners for 600 held in 6 inns and a firework display.<sup>(55)</sup> Without doubt their victory did much for their morale and helped them to tighten their hold on the Borough. In the Municipal Elections of November, 1836 they carried all six seats and reduced the Liberal Councillors to five in number, after gaining the advantage in the revision of the burgess list in the previous month.<sup>(56)</sup> But the Liberals, dismissing the Conservative victory over the Bill, as a "slight advantage", apparently faced reality and now proceeded to try to turn their opponents' flanks by concentrating on other issues in local affairs where they had already enjoyed some success. The bitter conflict between the two parties was not over - it merely moved to other battle-fields and was fought out in a process of costly litigation which eventually wore down the strength of the Conservatives.

#### The Borough and the Courts 1836-1840

While the Conservatives and their opponents were struggling over the main issue of the first municipal election, the Liberals had scored one important success over the appointment of magistrates for the Borough. Exercising the Crown's continuing right to make these appointments,<sup>(57)</sup> Lord John Russell ignored the Council's request that 6 Conservative nominees be appointed and accepted instead a list submitted by the Liberals, which included 5 of their partisans and one individual whom the Liberals had mistakenly counted on as a supporter.<sup>(58)</sup> Quite apart from the loss of face the Council thus suffered, and the further acrimony this caused between the parties, it was an important political advantage for the

Liberals which they were quick to exploit. In May, R.H. Parr, their <sup>^</sup>bête noir, was replaced as Magistrates' Clerk by a Liberal attorney and in September the Liberal magistrates successfully insisted on their right to sit on the Board of Poor Law Guardians, a body where the Conservatives had previously enjoyed a majority.<sup>(59)</sup> However, their most important power as magistrates was that of appointing the Parish Overseers through whom rates were collected but it was not until 1837 that they were able to exploit this advantage against the Council.

Throughout the first months of its existence the new Council had largely avoided the question of rates. A committee, established in May 1836, had recommended that a proper survey be made of the Borough to prepare for a Borough Rate but the Council deferred action and borrowed £1,600 to meet their expenses.<sup>(60)</sup> Many of the new councils were equally reluctant to make use of a Borough Rate,<sup>(61)</sup> but in Poole the Conservatives were doubtless mindful of their uncertain position, and the unpopularity of such a measure, especially as they had always accused their opponents of desiring to introduce such a measure as part of municipal reform. By December, however, a decision could be postponed no longer. The Council's funds were becoming exhausted, partly by the costs of litigation, and it had now incurred new commitments, in particular an undertaking to pay £4,500 compensation to the former Town Clerk, R.H. Parr, for his loss of offices.<sup>(62)</sup> This decision was to dog the Council for many years and to be the central issue in the political struggle which eventually destroyed the Conservatives' hold on the Council.

On 10th December, 1836, a rate of £5,000 was ordered, of which £1,350 was due to be paid to Parr, as the first instalment of his compensation.<sup>(63)</sup> The immediate protest this aroused prompted the Council to try to make the demand more acceptable. A committee was established on 26th December to "ascertain the best means of raising the £4,500 compensation by way of a loan and for the purpose of relieving the burthens imposed on the ratepayers", and since the Treasurer was now without any funds, it was decided that no further expenses be incurred until money became available. The Council also then took the desperate measure of initiating the process of selling the patronage of the Parish of St. James.<sup>(64)</sup> Finally on 3rd January, 1837, a rate instalment of £2,500 was ordered to provide for the expenses of both the Poor Law and the Borough.<sup>(65)</sup>



The Liberals had already seized on this opportunity to repair their political fortunes. Before the Council held its second meeting in December, a public meeting, with significantly W.F.S. Ponsonby in the chair, determined to resist the rate demand, especially because it provided "an enormous compensation to the former Town Clerk", and established a fund of £500 to fight a test case.<sup>(66)</sup> Feelings undoubtedly ran particularly high because Parr's compensation was seen as his reward for all his devious services to the Conservatives in the Council, who had rejected the claim for compensation submitted by the Liberal partisan dismissed from the Collectorship of the Quay Dues.<sup>(67)</sup> The Mayor's insistence that the ratepayers faced these new demands as a consequence of municipal reform only served to inflame feelings further.

The issue on this fresh battleground - the disputed legality of the Borough rate because of its inclusion of provision for Parr's compensation - was not fully joined until April 1837. The test case of *Turner v. the Mayor of Poole* was then heard at the Quarter Sessions. The Recorder found for the Mayor on a technicality and since he refused an appeal, an application was promptly made to King's Bench for a mandamus.<sup>(68)</sup> This appeal failed but before long a fresh cause of dispute brought another bout of litigation in which the Liberal magistrates were able to play a leading role.

They alleged (with justice) that the Mayor had acted improperly in the appointment of Parish Overseers in March 1837 by ignoring the wishes of the majority of the J.P.s<sup>(69)</sup> who had elected two reformers. Pending the decision of the Quarter Sessions on this allegation, 17 Liberal partisans, headed by the party leader, Parrott, and 3 other magistrates refused to pay the rate instalment. Parrott and 2 of his associates on the Bench then solemnly dismissed the summonses made against them. After the Recorder had condemned the manner of appointment of the Overseers and quashed the rate, the Liberals proceeded to arrange actions for trespass against the Mayor and ex-Mayor by the 14 remaining ratepayers who had been summoned for not paying the rates and whose goods had subsequently been distrained.<sup>(70)</sup> Ultimately these actions, heard at the April 1838 Assizes, failed disastrously.<sup>(71)</sup> In the meantime, however, the hapless Overseers, caught between the Council's demands that they enforce the rate and the magistrates' condemnation of it, tried to end their dilemma by seeking a mandamus in Queen's Bench and lost their application.<sup>(72)</sup> Their

failure to collect the full rate and the costs of litigation falling on the funds available for poor relief meant that from August 1837 severe difficulties were met in satisfying the demand for outdoor relief.<sup>(73)</sup>

The Borough Council itself was also falling into more and deeper financial and legal difficulties. Back in September, 1836, the Liberals had mounted a successful flanking action over the appointment of trustees for the town's charities, making use of the favour of the Whig administration, as they had done over the appointment of magistrates. This resulted in a dispute between the Council and the Lord Chancellor before trustees representing the two political parties were selected. Quarrels between the trustees and the fact that the cost of proceedings were met in part from the funds of the charities meant that the recipients of the charities failed to receive their normal allotments.<sup>(74)</sup> During 1837 the dismissed Liberal Quay Collector succeeded in his appeal to the Treasury for compensation but the Council determined to contest the award and thus became involved in a further High Court action.<sup>(75)</sup> More law costs were incurred in the quo warranto proceedings which had started in January, 1836.<sup>(76)</sup> By November 1837, the Liberals had also instigated some of the ratepayers to refuse to pay the Lamp and Watch rate, and street lighting, already interrupted by the general lack of funds in 1836, was not available as the winter of 1837 began.<sup>(77)</sup> So heavy was the drain on the Council's limited funds that at the end of 1837 they were forced to agree with the magistrates that prisoners could no longer be maintained in the town gaol, and they were henceforth lodged in the County Gaol at Dorchester.<sup>(78)</sup>

Calamitous though these circumstances were, the greater threat to the Council and the peace of the town lay in the dispute over the compensation they had agreed to pay to their ex-Town Clerk. Undeterred by their failure to have the 1837 rate annulled on this ground, Ponsonby and the Liberals commenced a Chancery suit against Parr and the Council.<sup>(79)</sup> The first stage of this long drawn out action ended in December 1837, when the Master of the Rolls allowed the demurrers entered by Parr and found no cause for interference with the Council's award to Parr.<sup>(80)</sup> This decision meant that Parr could and did pursue his claim for the first instalment of his compensation from the Council, and it also vindicated the Council's conduct in making the award, and by implication, the rate made to pay it. Parr was willing to accept a stay of execution for three months on the first instalment, however. Thus, despite their severe financial difficulties, the Council could at last hope to collect a fresh

rate and eventually find ways of meeting its commitments. These hopes were however quickly dashed when Ponsonby and his supporters appealed to the Lord Chancellor against the findings of the Master of the Rolls.<sup>(81)</sup> The legality of the fresh rate made in January 1838 was immediately called into question while the results of the appeal were awaited. By April none of the rate had been paid over by the Overseers, who were still struggling to find funds for the poor, and by November, 1838 the Treasurer had received only £1,349 of the £3,773 expected.<sup>(82)</sup> In the same month the Lord Chancellor overruled the Master of the Rolls but allowed one of the demurrers entered by Parr and the Council.<sup>(83)</sup> The Chancery action and all the consequent uncertainty of the legality of rates designed in part to meet Parr's claims were to continue, while at the same time Parr was entitled to enforce his claim against the Council. There was now no immediate prospect of the Council solving its financial and legal difficulties.

Early in 1839 the Council reached an even lower point in its fortunes when Parr, in pursuit of the first instalment of his compensation, of which the luckless Council had only so far found £45, was awarded the Council's property on a judgement debt. The Town Clerk was able to rescue the Council muniments but virtually all of their unmortgaged property and moveables, including the new furniture of the Guildhall, was seized for Parr, who henceforward enjoyed the rents of the Council's property.<sup>(84)</sup> The beleaguered Council fought on and made a further rate to try to meet its mounting expenses, including thoughtfully an estimate of £1,000 for legal expenses, and the second instalment of Parr's compensation.<sup>(85)</sup> Their opponents however were ready for them and promptly obtained counsel's opinion that the rate was illegal because it included retrospective items.<sup>(86)</sup> Failing to find more than £350 for Parr, the Council was confronted in November 1839 by a peremptory mandamus to pay his second instalment.<sup>(87)</sup>

There was now a danger that the councillors might be individually penalized if they failed to obey the mandamus and this, together with the Liberal gains in the 1839 municipal elections, prompted at length some attempt at accommodation between the two parties.<sup>(88)</sup> Some of the Liberals were evidently willing to make a compromise with Parr whereby he should obtain his compensation from the Council's rents, cancel the bond of compensation and thus put an end to the Chancery proceedings. However, Ponsonby and a number of his supporters, including Parrott, the Liberal leader, refused to compromise their resistance to Parr and the Chancery action went on.<sup>(89)</sup>

The following months brought further reverses for the Council. Having at long last accepted the Liberal proposal to separate the Borough and Poor Rates and to quash the previous rates, the Council found that the ratepayers of Longfleet, encouraged by Parrott and further legal opinion, still refused to accept its legality, with the result that it was only partially collected. The Finance Committee had to admit at this point that it could not carry out the Council's wishes "for the want of funds to supply even the fees of Counsel with the necessary statement of the Case for his opinion".<sup>(90)</sup> In 1840 too, the Council realised with horror that the sale of the patronage and Rectory of St. James would produce only a small fraction of the £2,850 they had anticipated because of "the most unexpected and enormous amount of law charges".<sup>(91)</sup> Before long their expenses threatened to increase even more alarmingly as Thomas Arnold, the Town Clerk, failing to secure payment of his outstanding bills for over £4,000 and fearing that the Liberals would soon capture control, commenced another action against the Council.<sup>(92)</sup> Before the municipal elections of 1840 finally gave control of the Council to the Liberals, R.H. Parr added insult to injury and entangled the Borough in yet more litigation by having an ejectment order served on the Mayor to obtain possession of the Guildhall itself.<sup>(93)</sup>

#### The Pattern of Municipal Politics 1836-c.1840

The Liberals had won their eventual victory in 1840 by pursuing a policy of attrition against their opponents, exploiting involved litigation and the favour of the Whig government. It was they who had denied the Council all but £8,000 of the £23,000 demanded in rates. They were responsible for much of the sum of £7,000 spent in legal costs and for part of the burden of £10,000 debt left by the Conservative councillors. The Liberals could of course claim justification for the methods they had chosen to use after the Lords' refusal to grant a remedy for their grievances over the 1835 election and the Council's suspicious dealings with Parr, but there is nonetheless some irony in a party which claimed to stand for popular and economical control of municipal government resorting so extensively to costly legal proceedings and relying so heavily on the favour of the local Whig magnate and the aristocratic Whig government.

Indeed, the record of municipal elections shows that the Liberals found it more difficult to convince the electors of their virtue and competence than might have been expected in view of the misfortunes suffered by the Council. It was not until November 1838 that the Liberals were able

to win municipal elections.<sup>(94)</sup> In 1836 they had failed to carry any seats and were thus reduced to a rump of 5 councillors.<sup>(95)</sup> They claimed that this was due to the Conservatives paying the poor rates of paupers to qualify them as electors but while there was doubtless truth in this, it is nevertheless surprising that the Liberals fared so badly in a year in which the Commons inquiry and debates had paraded the dubious conduct of their opponents before the electors. In the following year many of their supporters were disqualified by their refusal to pay 'illegal' rates but it is still difficult to accept fully their stated reason for not even contesting the elections - that "Such misguided and obstinate persons (the Conservatives) may perhaps arrive at a more early conviction that a disgraceful crisis must overtake their conduct, by being left to themselves for the present".<sup>(96)</sup> Their leader, Parrott, and two more of his colleagues, thus let their seats go by default and the Liberal representation was reduced to two councillors. It was a short-sighted decision which was to leave them in opposition for a longer period than might otherwise have followed, because despite their sweeping gains in 1838 and 1839 the Mayor's casting vote kept them from power until 1840.<sup>(97)</sup>

The Liberal tactics of litigation were thus forced on them because of their comparative lack of influence with the electorate. Despite their efforts to exploit the Council's misfortunes,<sup>(98)</sup> it appears that the mounting burden of law expenses, the interruptions of payment of poor relief and charity funds and the town's darkened streets rebounded initially against the Council's opponents instead of the Council itself.

The weakness of the Liberals rests on these considerations: the nature of society in Poole, the advantage which the municipal electoral system gave to their opponents and the resilience of the Conservatives in face of their many difficulties.

Society in Poole in this period was still to a large extent as it had been shaped by the town's staple of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Newfoundland trade. This trade was indeed continuing to decline in the 1830s but the principal trades which were growing in place of it, commerce in timber, clay and corn, encouraged the same pattern of society to continue.<sup>(99)</sup> It was a community in which a large number of seamen and labourers in the lower orders, and a much smaller 'middling' group of artisans, sea-captains and shopkeepers, were dependent on a few merchants and shipowners. Despite the growth of some alternative trade it was a poor community and feelings of dependence were reinforced by the lack of any significant industrial development in the town until the establishment of potteries early in the second half of the century.<sup>(100)</sup> For many of

the lower orders and the middle group in society the particular discipline required in maritime service, and to a lesser extent in ship-building and provisioning, strengthened this dependence and helped to create a deferential attitude towards their employers or patrons. In these circumstances the Conservatives were able for a time to rely on the support of much of the community for it was they who represented most clearly, especially in the Slade family, who owned the major continuing interest in the Newfoundland trade, the traditional elite of the town. Their familiar defence of "the Independence of the Town of Poole" against the "external influences by which it has latterly been surrounded",<sup>(101)</sup> the influence of the Whig Lord of the Manor and the greater interference by central government in the affairs of the Borough in the period of reform after 1832, was at first accepted by many in this depressed community, or at least preferred to the less certain prospects involved in the promises of the Liberals "to carry out the great principles of Reform and Retrenchment".<sup>(102)</sup> In the absence of significant industrial growth in the town no powerful working class interests, such as those in Manchester,<sup>(103)</sup> could develop. Nor, because of the particular nature of the town's economic decline, did the lower orders come to support Chartism, as they did in other communities where industries were in decay.<sup>(104)</sup> Instead, many of them were willing to accept the rule of the traditional elite until it had clearly become inadequate, when they turned to the Council's opponents.

The advantage the Conservatives enjoyed in this manner must be viewed in conjunction with the effects of the municipal franchise prescribed by the Act of 1835. The vote was granted to ratepayers of two and a half years standing who were rated in respect of a "house, warehouse, counting-house or shop".<sup>(105)</sup> It was in many ways a restrictive franchise, disqualifying for example the freemen and other previous parliamentary voters, but had one more liberal feature in that ratepayers with premises of less than £10 annual value could qualify for the vote. However, as Professor Keith-Lucas found in his study of the municipal franchise, the omission of the £10 property qualification enforced for parliamentary voters did not have the effect of increasing the number of municipal voters to the extent that might be expected. He concluded that on average the number of municipal electors was some 15% lower than the total of parliamentary electors. One reason for this was the effect of the practice of compounding, whereby landlords paid the rates for their tenants, who were then very often dis-franchised. Another reason was the failure of ratepayers to establish that they had paid rates for two and a half years.

Thirdly, those who received alms were disqualified. Finally, the majority of the poorer householders were excluded from the franchise because their houses were frequently not rated at all.<sup>(106)</sup>

In 1835 the number of municipal voters in Poole was 383, against 446 parliamentary electors and the Borough was therefore typical of those studied by Professor Keith-Lucas in that the total of municipal electors was approximately 15% less than the total qualified to vote in parliamentary elections. However, the practice of compounding was not used in the town and the reduced number of municipal voters resulted initially from the high proportion of properties for which the payment of rates was excused because of the poverty of the owners or tenants. In 1835 this was put at 926 of the 1462 houses rated.<sup>(107)</sup> After 1835 however, the 1836 Poor Rate Book for the Parish of St. James shows that the practice of excusing the payment of rates was discontinued.<sup>(108)</sup> Instead the rates on such properties were generally allowed to fall into arrears. By November 1836 the rates on 1057 of the total of 1887 properties rated were in arrears.<sup>(109)</sup>

This change of method was presumably adopted in an attempt to increase the total receipts and meet the additional cost of poor relief. However, the practice of rating every property had the effect of making it easier for the political parties to manipulate the payment of rates and create dependent voters for municipal elections. If householders had continued to be excused the payment of rates then there would have been no question of them becoming municipal voters. Since every householder was now liable to pay rates it was possible for the agents of the parties to select suitable individuals and pay their rates so that they could become voters. The complaints made by the Liberals at the manner in which the Conservatives paid the votes of poor people to qualify them as municipal voters, with the connivance of Conservative Parish Overseers, started in 1835 and continued until 1839, by which time the Liberals had been able to secure the appointment of Overseers representing both parties.<sup>(110)</sup>

The Conservatives undoubtedly gained some advantage from this tactic. Analysis of the first municipal election of December 1835, the only election for which any substantial documentary evidence survives, shows that the Conservatives had much greater success than their opponents in enlisting the support of the poorer householders. Of their 67 voters in the South East ward no fewer than 25 were not £10 householders, against only 9 of the 78 Liberal voters. They also recruited a larger number of

voters without the £10 qualification in the North West ward at this election but this had no influence on the result.<sup>(111)</sup> It is likely that the Conservative success in November 1836 was again due at least in part to their successful use of this method. The depressed state of the town's trade played into their hands.

It is not surprising that the Conservatives were able to exploit this advantage over the Liberals. In general they were a more wealthy group than their opponents. The few merchants who supported the Liberals included none who could match the resources of the Slade family. Moreover, the Conservatives had increased their general influence in the town by buying up a great deal of property, often at bargain prices because of the effects of the economic recession in the town.<sup>(112)</sup> This also meant that as landlords they had a particular knowledge of the opportunities to create additional voters. Thus poorer householders like Absolam Cole, who lived in a small house in the High Street owned by one of the Slades, and William Warren of Waterloo Buildings, whose tenement belonged to one of the Parr family, voted for the Conservatives in December 1835.<sup>(113)</sup>

The advantage the Conservatives seized in the manipulation of the municipal electoral system was not permanent - it did not save them in the elections between 1838 and 1840. However, it may be suggested that it had a greater effect than carrying the 1835 and 1836 elections for them. It contributed to the Liberal's decision not to contest the election in 1837, which was to prolong the Conservative control of the Council, and helped to encourage the Conservatives to maintain their efforts to keep power despite their numerous reverses.

These reverses included their repeated failure to win parliamentary elections in Poole, where the Liberals succeeded in maintaining a majority of about 30 votes between 1835 and 1841. In these elections the Liberals were not weakened by the uneven distribution of their voters between the two wards used in municipal elections. However, the most significant advantages the Liberals enjoyed in parliamentary elections were the effectiveness of the manorial interest amongst the £10 voters and the comparative lack of success that the Conservatives had in intimidating or bribing the parliamentary electors, which contrasted with their achievement in persuading the poorer householders to support them. There are indications of the success the Conservatives obtained in influencing the poorer voters in the national results of the 1835 general election when they won a number of larger boroughs, nearly all of which had large freeman electorates.<sup>(114)</sup>



The resilience shown by the Conservatives was remarkable. They showed great readiness in joining issue with their opponents. Lacking the finer feelings which moved some of the Liberals in Leicester,<sup>(115)</sup> the Council found time amidst its trials over the first rate in February, 1837 to adopt petitions in support of the House of Lords and the Church to the King and Parliament.<sup>(116)</sup> Although 1838 was a year in which personal reverses as well as municipal problems affected some of the leading members of the Council - two were declared bankrupt and a third, the Customs Collector, disappeared leaving a deficiency in his accounts<sup>(117)</sup> - by February 1839 the Council was gleefully composing a petition to the Lords to inform them of the recent cross-examination of the Liberal magistrates in the trial of Carroll v. Slade, in which they "stated most extraordinary facts tending to show that they were not persons fit to hold the important situation of Magistrates."<sup>(118)</sup>

As late as December 1839, when the Liberals had won the two previous municipal elections and were near to capturing control of the Council, the Conservatives kept their nerve and faced a High Court hearing over their refusal to declare the result of a by-election won by a Liberal councillor.<sup>(119)</sup> Shortly afterwards they ignored for some time an attempted Liberal coup, in which the Liberals, making use of a standing order, had called a Council meeting attended by them alone and had proceeded to dismiss the Town Clerk and other officials in favour of their own nominees.<sup>(120)</sup> Their reserves of audacity were however dwindling and in the period from December 1839 until they finally lost the Council to the Liberals in November 1840 there are signs of a more relaxed attitude. For example, in December 1839 they at length agreed to the Liberal proposal that reporters, but not the public, should be admitted to Council meetings, Liberal councillors were elected to committees and sometimes took the chair in the absence of the Mayor.<sup>(121)</sup> The eventual Liberal victory clearly came in part because their opponents were exhausted.

When they surrendered power in 1840 the Conservatives left a burden of debt and a legacy of political discord, which their opponents had of course helped to create. However, the Conservatives had done a little more than merely keep themselves in power since 1836. It is true that many aspects of local government had suffered in the bitter struggles of these years - the provision of poor relief and charity and the lighting of the streets had been interrupted. After 1836 topics of local services or repairs, such as the cleansing of the streets or the repair of the Butter Market, virtually disappeared from the Council Minutes.<sup>(122)</sup> However, the Council was successful in undertaking the one new function allocated

to the new town councils by the Municipal Reform Act - the establishment of a police force controlled by a Watch Committee.<sup>(123)</sup>

In contrast to the behaviour of numerous boroughs, where the councils delayed the setting up of police forces for many years,<sup>(124)</sup> the new Council in Poole established a Watch Committee at its first meeting. This had its first meeting on 20th January 1836 and promptly established a force of 21 constables, including a superintendant and his assistant and a night superintendant with another assistant officer. At the same time very precise regulations were laid down for the duties of the police.<sup>(125)</sup> The Watch Committee continued to exercise very careful supervision over the police force. In 1837 a new Police Office was opened on a more convenient site than the old Watch House<sup>(126)</sup> and in 1839 the pay of the constables was increased from 13/- to 14/- per week "in order to keep them above the pay of journeymen, tradesmen and to induce (sic) to the more independent discharge of the duties of their office in the present times of disaffection and unbalance against Her Majesty and her laws and government".<sup>(127)</sup> There is no evidence that the Chartist disturbances of 1839 had any direct repercussions on law and order in Poole but the Watch Committee was evidently better prepared for such an eventuality than many of the authorities in larger industrial towns such as Bolton or Stockport, which were more exposed to the threat of disorder.<sup>(128)</sup>

The initial provision of 21 constables for a population of approximately 8,500 (a ratio of one constable to every 404 inhabitants) meant that for some time Poole had a police force with a greater relative strength than that of the Metropolitan Police, which had one constable to every 443 inhabitants in 1840.<sup>(129)</sup> The increasingly severe financial problems of the Council caused reductions in the strength of the force by 1838 however. In that year it was reduced to 18 and one part-time superannuated constable. Two more constables were dismissed in 1839 and in 1840 the force was reduced to a total of 12 men.<sup>(130)</sup> After the Liberals took power it was further reduced to 9 men.<sup>(131)</sup>

Such reductions were made elsewhere for the sake of economy or from a lack of understanding the benefits of an adequate police force.<sup>(132)</sup> In Poole it is almost certain that the financial plight of the Council at the time was responsible for the reduction made after 1840. There had been some indication of hostility to the police force amongst the supporters of the Liberals in 1836. The correspondent of the Salisbury Journal reported in February that "the inhabitants have been much annoyed by the officious interference of the new police-men with even the most frivolous and trifling affairs".<sup>(133)</sup> In March, he alleged that "... to such an

extent has the arbitrary power of these party tools been carried that it is not safe for any respectable person of liberal politics to walk in the streets of the town after dark".<sup>(134)</sup> However, this correspondent was dismissed by the editor of the Salisbury Journal in the following April, after he had made an apparently totally unfounded allegation that one of the constables had been convicted of assaulting a pregnant woman in the street.<sup>(135)</sup> Subsequently there is no evidence of any political feeling against the police and it is unlikely that the reduction in the force made after 1840 came about because the Liberals had any doctrinaire feelings of hostility to it. They apparently maintained the force at 9 men during their period of control over the Council.

While the reductions in the size of the Poole force from 1838 meant that it no longer compared so favourably with the size of the Metropolitan Police, the details of the strength of the Borough forces in England and Wales in 1839, 1842 and 1848 which Mr. F.C. Mather provides, show that it was still relatively stronger than the forces provided in many other boroughs where it might be argued that stronger forces were necessary. It was a relatively larger force than those deployed in other ports such as Cardiff, Plymouth or Portsmouth, or industrial centres like Derby or Wigan.<sup>(136)</sup>

In spite of the enervating effects of the bitter conflicts in the new Town Council in Poole the Watch Committee had thus achieved marked success in establishing a police force. The Liberal magistrates used their authority to oppose the Conservatives but there is no evidence that they attempted to interfere with the Watch Committee's work, although such interference took place elsewhere.<sup>(137)</sup> The concern of the Conservatives for law and order was evidently shared by their Liberal adversaries. The Committee remained under the control of Conservatives until they lost power in 1840 and was systematic and intelligent in its supervision of the police. It was the one aspect of municipal government in the town where common ground existed between the rival parties and where real progress was achieved after the Municipal Corporations Act.

The Liberals behaved only slightly more generously than their opponents when they assumed control of the Council in November 1840. The Town Clerk and other Borough officers were dismissed in favour of Liberal nominees and only one Conservative member was allowed to remain on the Council committees.<sup>(138)</sup> After continuing to win municipal elections and replacing Conservative Aldermen, by 1844 they monopolised the representation on the Council.<sup>(139)</sup> They were however divided. Some of their

more respectable supporters inclined to Whig views while those of humbler rank had a more radical outlook. In 1844 the mayoralty was contested by "a highly respectable attorney" and a bookseller and printer "of the low radical faction", who won the election.<sup>(140)</sup> This division continued and helped the Conservatives to regain control of the Council in 1849.

In spite of their internal disagreements the Liberals were able to go some way towards putting the affairs of the Borough in order. By 1844 the Chancery suit over Parr's compensation had at length ended in a partial victory for him and after a further four years of wrangling the shape of a final settlement was almost agreed.<sup>(141)</sup> It was not until 1851 however that the Council was able to arrange a mortgage to pay Parr the £5,000 settled. This mortgage was not paid off until 1865 and effectively deprived the Borough of rents from its properties until it was ended.<sup>(142)</sup> In 1851 too the Council at last settled its debts to Thomas Arnold, the other former Town Clerk, who had died 7 years before.<sup>(143)</sup>

It was understandable that the Liberals should have taken so long to make any real progress in unravelling the tangle of legal issues they had helped to create while they were in opposition. They also found that their former encouragement of resistance to paying rates was an obstacle when they made their own more modest demands. There was apparently no concerted resistance to the payment of rates as such but the Council had to deal with a large number of arrears in the period 1841-1843.<sup>(144)</sup>

Short of funds, distracted still by the Parr and Arnold law suits and by their own bitter feelings, they too failed to provide adequate leadership for the community. It is true that minor improvements were once again possible in the 1840s. A steam dredger was used on the harbour channels in 1841. 1842 saw improvements to the Town Gaol. Stricter regulations for the markets were made in 1843.<sup>(145)</sup> However, in 1846 major proposals for improvements to the harbour, and the Council's powers of administration over it, failed. This was caused in part by the Council's financial problems but also reflected continuing partisan rivalries. The projected improvement of the harbour was supported by the predominantly Conservative merchant interest and drafted by their old adversary, R.H. Parr.<sup>(146)</sup> It is clear that the Liberals opposed it partly because of this. Thus an attempt to improve the harbour, so that it could be used by larger ships which would handle consignments of goods in conjunction with the proposed railway connection to Poole, came to nothing. For the time being, the sole indirect result of the scheme was the new Poole railway station, situated inconveniently at Hamworthy. A valuable opportunity to speed the town's economic recovery had been missed.

Liberal rule in the 1840s therefore achieved only very limited success. The legacy of debt, distrust and neglect lasted for many years after the coming of municipal reform and it is hardly surprising to find the first Liberal Mayor of the reformed Council, a Quaker, writing to his niece in 1848: "I do not participate with thee in thy love of our 'noble' Town and County. 'Tis a very poor place". (147)

Other towns however experienced bitter divisions in politics and society and great difficulties in implementing the provisions of the Municipal Reform Act in this period. Nottingham and Leicester were hampered by the legacy of debt left by the former corporations there, and it took slightly longer to settle the compensation for Leicester's former town clerk than it did in Poole. (148) Why then were the misfortunes of the reformed Borough of Poole so much greater? The surviving evidence of political lampoons from this period almost convinces one that the personalities of the leading contenders contributed much to the town's problems - that R.H. Parr was indeed the "smooth-tongued" and "fake hearted patron of that most worthy clique that ne'er existed but for private pique" (149) - and that G.L. Parrott, one of the Liberal leaders and "the trading agitator", was a:

"Proud man!  
Drest in a little brief authority,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assured  
... like an angry ape  
Plays such fantastic tricks about this Boro'  
As makes the ratepayers weep". (150)

The causes of the Borough's particular misfortunes lie deeper than in the effects of personalities however. One explanation must be that municipal reform in Poole came to a community which was in economic decline after enjoying a long period of prosperity from its staple trade. Political and social divisions were thus sharpened and lacking any tangible prospects of economic improvement, such as those which Professor Temple Patterson has charted in Southampton in this period, (151) the community turned in upon itself with disastrous consequences. Exeter too "was facing the problem of survival" but fortunately retained its position "and substantial, though ill-distributed, prosperity as a provincial capital". (152) In contrast, Poole, once a capital of Newfoundland, faced a continuing decline in its position and prosperity. In these bewildering circumstances the coming of parliamentary reform and the prospect of municipal reform had already provoked the revival of old grievances and conflicts in a more bitter form. When municipal reform

became a reality in 1835-36, the Conservatives, in part justifiably proud of the record of the old Corporation, and resentful of the progress and threats of further reform, which were aided locally by the Whig Lord of the Manor of Canford, determined to resist the danger they saw to the 'Independence of the Borough' by imposing their version of municipal reform. This they attempted to do by audacious conduct, especially in the first municipal election and in their dealings with Parr. Their opponents, although at first at some disadvantage were nonetheless strongly enough placed to continue the battle for "working out the provisions of the Reform Bill in all the purity, according to the original design" and to "Reform those abuses, which have too long existed to the injury of the middle and lower classes of the Community".<sup>(153)</sup> The struggle between these old and new attitudes was the more acrimonious and exhausting for the town not only because the contenders were reasonably evenly matched in strength but because the whole future of the community was in such doubt.

# FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER EIGHT

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109. Ibid.
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111. Calculations based on lists of voters in P.P., Poole Municipal Election Report, Appendices 2, 4, 6-7, and poll books for parliamentary elections in January and May 1835. Split votes have been counted where a major party preference is clear in the municipal poll.
112. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 38, B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 8th February, 1833.
113. P.P., Poole Municipal Election Report; St. James Parish Rate Book, 1836.
114. D. Close, 'The Rise of the Conservatives in the Age of Reform', B.I.H.R., Vol.XLV, (1972), pp. 90-1.
115. Patterson, Radical Leicester, op. cit., pp. 221-2.
116. Council Minute Book, op. cit., 20th February, 1837.
117. Ibid, 9th May, 1838, 15th June, 1839; S.J., 26th November, 1838.
118. Committee Book, op. cit., 11th February, 1839.
119. S.J., 18th, 25th November, 1839.
120. Council Minute Book, op. cit., 4th December, 1839, 3rd January, 1840.
121. Ibid, 5th, 13th December, 1839, 11th, 18th February, 16th March, 17th, 26th June, 11th July, 5th August, 1840.
122. Ibid, 17th May, 26th August, 1836.
123. F.C. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists, (Manchester, 1959), p. 112.
124. Ibid, pp. 112-3.
125. Watch Committee Book 1836-1840, 20th January, 1836.
126. Ibid, 14th February, 1837.
127. Ibid, 22nd August, 1839.
128. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists, op. cit., p. 114 and Appendix 1, pp. 238-242.
129. Ibid, p. 113.
130. Watch Committee Book, op. cit., 2nd April, 1838, 11th February, 1839, 16th March, 1840.
131. P.B.A., Council Minute Book, 1841-1847, 4th August, 1841.
132. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists, op. cit., p. 115.

133. S.J., 22nd February, 1836.
134. Ibid, 21st March, 1836.
135. Ibid, 4th, 11th, 18th April, 1836.
136. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists, op. cit., Appendix 1, pp. 238-242.
137. Ibid, p. 117.
138. Council Minute Book 1836-1841, op. cit., 9th November, 1840.
139. Council Minute Book, 1841-1847, op. cit., 9th November, 1844.
140. Dorset County Chronicle, 14th November, 1844.
141. Council Minute Book, 1841-1847, op. cit., 21st November, 1844; P.B.A., Council Minute Book, 1847-1880, 14th January, 4th March, 1848.
142. Council Minute Book, 1847-1880, op. cit., 6th January, 12th February, 1849; Beamish, Dockerill and Hillier, op. cit., pp. 258-264.
143. Beamish, Dockerill and Hillier, op. cit., p. 263.
144. Council Minute Book, 1841-1847, op. cit., 18th August, 3rd September, 6th November, 1841, 6th April, 1st-15th August, 4th October, 1842, 11th January, 1st August, 2nd October, 1843.
145. Ibid, 6th December, 1841, 28th February, 1842, 19th May, 1843.
146. Ibid, 5th January, 7th, 17th February, 20th, 28th March, 1846; Beamish, Dockerill and Hillier, op. cit., pp. 257-8.
147. Norman Penney, My Ancestors, (London and Ashford, 1920), p. 115.
148. Church, op. cit., p. 180; Patterson, Radical Leicester, op. cit., pp. 216, 218-20.
149. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'The Crisis', attributed to 1842.
150. 'A Conservative', op. cit., Title page.
151. Patterson, A History of Southampton, op. cit., Vol.II, Chapter 1, The Coming of the Railway and the Docks, passim.
152. Newton, Victorian Exeter, op. cit., pp. 74-5.
153. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'An Elector of Longfleet', 19th July, 1837.

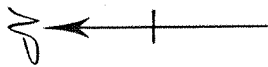
CHAPTER NINE  
POLITICS AND ELECTIONS 1832-c.1841

Historians are still divided over the true significance of the 1832 Reform Act. Some have emphasized the limitations of its effect upon political life.<sup>(1)</sup> They have stressed that the survival of numerous small boroughs, the lack of uniformity in the application of the £10 franchise, the inadequacy of the registration law and the continued venality of electors and their deference to aristocracy, meant that electoral politics after 1832 frequently bore a strong resemblance to conditions before the Reform Act. Others have been more willing to recognise the fundamental changes in politics which the Reform Act brought.<sup>(2)</sup> There is still scope therefore for studies of the effects of the Act at constituency level to establish how much change there was in politics in the period immediately after 1832.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Constituency

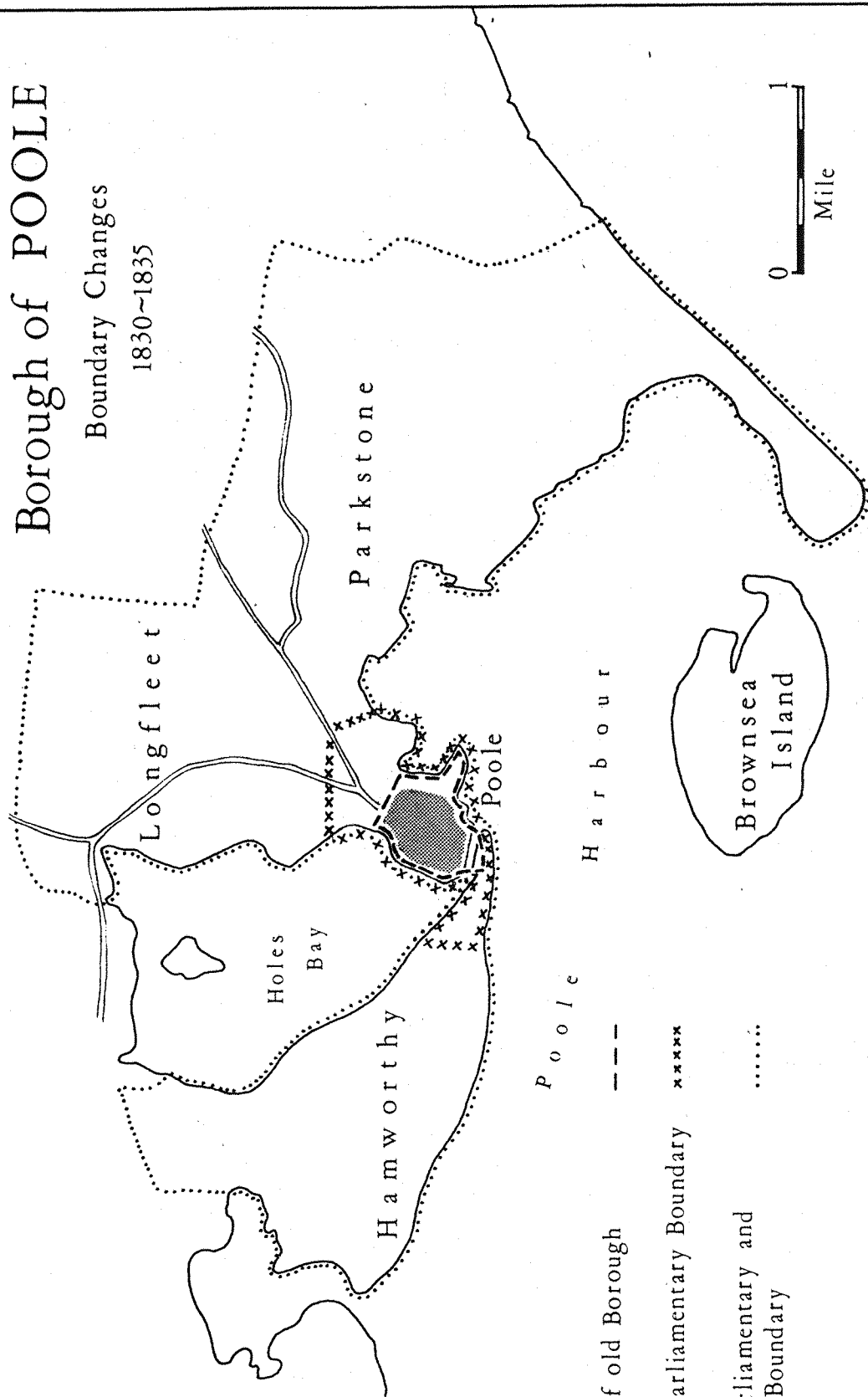
Poole did not suffer the indignity of appearing amongst those boroughs in Schedule A or B which were to be completely or partially disfranchised. The 1821 census, which was used by the committee preparing the Reform Bill as a guide to the disfranchising of constituencies, recorded a population in the town of 6,390, well above the minimum at first judged necessary for a two member borough.<sup>(4)</sup> However, by December 1831 it became necessary to adopt a fresh formula, based on the number of houses in the boroughs and the amount of assessed taxes paid.<sup>(5)</sup> It was this decision that first prompted the enlargement of borough boundaries - to secure a minimum of 300 electors in each borough.<sup>(6)</sup> In addition, the Boundary Commissioners were instructed to consider administrative convenience and the need to provide for the physical growth of boroughs which already possessed the minimum number of electors in making their recommendations.<sup>(7)</sup> Their work resulted in boundary changes for all but a few of the English boroughs, 65 of them being drastically altered.<sup>(8)</sup>

The extension of the boundaries of the Poole constituency at first proposed was comparatively modest. Parts of the adjacent tithings of Longfleet and Parkstone in Canford Parish and part of the Parish of Hamworthy were to be incorporated in the old Borough. These additions were recommended so that much of the area of Longfleet and Parkstone where housing growth was taking place should be added to the Borough. The extension of the boundary in Hamworthy would also add an area of settlement adjacent to the small part of Hamworthy already within the Borough boundaries. The effect of these changes would have been to



# Borough of POOLE

Boundary Changes  
1830~1835



P o o l e      H a r b o u r

Boundary of old Borough

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Proposed Parliamentary Boundary

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Revised Parliamentary and  
Municipal Boundary

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increase the total population of the constituency from 6,454 to 6,959 and its area from 172 acres to 352 acres. The number of £10 houses was to be increased from an estimated 350 to 410.<sup>(9)</sup>

However, the Boundary Act of 1832 enlarged the constituency boundaries still further - annexing to the old Borough all instead of parts of Longfleet and Parkstone, as well as that part of Hamworthy originally proposed.<sup>(10)</sup> Thus the area of the constituency was greatly enlarged - from 172 acres to 6,040 acres. Because of the largely undeveloped nature of much of Longfleet and Parkstone the total population was increased more modestly - to 8,216 inhabitants of whom 412 were enfranchised.<sup>(11)</sup> The original extension proposed obeyed the instruction that the boundaries should not be extended further than one mile but the further enlargement of the Borough carried the boundaries past this limit up to a distance of two and a half miles.

The initial proposal for the extension of the boundaries aroused great opposition in the town, but was understandably supported by Ponsonby, who owned much of the land now to be added to the constituency.<sup>(12)</sup> The Corporation, and meetings of the inhabitants denounced the proposal,<sup>(13)</sup> maintaining that the existing Borough was "beyond the standard understood to be proposed .... in the number of £10 houses" and declaring that "the professed object of the Reform Bill ... will be endangered, inasmuch as nearly the whole of the Property to be annexed ... belongs to the Canford Estate, and would therefore give the Proprietor of such Estate the means of establishing a preponderating and overwhelming influence in the Representation of the Borough".<sup>(14)</sup> A further objection raised was the likelihood that townspeople would have an additional incentive to move into the new district and enjoy lighter rates and taxes than in the old town.<sup>(15)</sup>

Initially the leaders of the Reformers joined in the opposition to the boundary changes,<sup>(16)</sup> indicating a division of interest between the Whig Lord of the Manor and their own enthusiasm for a more radical measure of parliamentary reform which would reduce the power of the aristocracy. However, they appear to have changed their minds rapidly for a petition against the extensions was initiated by the Tories alone, and a subsequent public meeting adopted a memorial seeking the further extension of the parliamentary boundaries, to include the whole of Longfleet and Parkstone.<sup>(17)</sup> There is no clear evidence of why the attitude of the Reformers changed but presumably they were persuaded by the advantage to the reform cause in general which the further extension of the constituency would bring. It is possible too that the strength of the reaction

to the changes first proposed amongst their opponents also helped to make them think again about this proposal.

The causes and effects of the re-drawing of constituency boundaries in 1832 are still a subject of historical controversy. They have been interpreted by Professor Moore as additional evidence for his thesis that the aristocracy made use of the parliamentary reform crisis to redress the balance in the existing order - instead of making concessions to the critics of the old representative system.<sup>(18)</sup> As Professor Cannon has pointed out in making his objections to Moore's argument over the importance of the urban freeholders, a basic difficulty in approaching Professor Moore's thesis is that "The most ardent exponent of the 'concession' thesis would scarcely dispute that the upper classes made the best possible bargains for themselves".<sup>(19)</sup> Other writers have stressed the desire of Grey's government not to disturb legitimate electoral interests and the Whigs have been defended against the charge that they sought party advantage in the re-drawing of the constituencies.<sup>(20)</sup> Both Professors Gash and Hennock have identified a more constructive motive for the re-shaping of constituency boundaries, a desire to secure the representation of real communities.<sup>(21)</sup> Indeed, Professor Moore's latest restatement of his thesis also appears to accept the government's concern for legitimate interests and real communities.<sup>(22)</sup>

The extension of the Poole constituency first proposed was in part an attempt to preserve the influence of the Manor of Canford. It was also prompted by the need to provide for the continuing growth of the community. Inasmuch as Ponsonby's was an existing influence and depended in part on the concern of the Lord of the Manor for the well being of the town, it may be regarded as a legitimate interest. It was however, threatened by the changes in the franchise proposed in 1832. Had the electoral boundaries remained unchanged Ponsonby would have no longer been able to draw on the support of many of the numerous non-resident electors who had voted for him and Sir John Byng between 1826 and 1831. He would have enjoyed limited opportunities to use direct influence on the voters in the old Borough because he owned little property of consequence there.<sup>(23)</sup> The Tories in Poole had fought the elections of 1826 and 1831 on the issue of the town's independence from the Manor of Canford. Lester-Lester had refused to ally himself with Ponsonby, and the Reformers in Poole were also uneasy at the intrusion of his influence in the town. If his interest was to remain effective, it was essential that part of the new district be included in the constituency.



It must be accepted that the first proposals for the extension of the boundaries were also prompted by the sensible desire to incorporate areas which were natural out-growths from the old town. It is the further extension of the constituency, which exceeded the limit laid down for such extensions, and went further than the Commissioners recommended, which raises the suspicion of jobbery on the part of the Whigs.

It was Byng who was credited with the responsibility for securing the new boundaries and was to profit initially from the inclusion of the new district<sup>(24)</sup> but the interest he depended on was Ponsonby's. Ponsonby was the brother of Duncannon, a leading figure in the administration who sat on the committee preparing the Reform Bill.<sup>(25)</sup> Ponsonby had suffered a sensational defeat in the Dorset by-election of October 1831 by Lord Ashley and had withdrawn his petition against Ashley's return because of the expense involved.<sup>(26)</sup> Was it not likely that the government extended a particular favour to him (and to the Whig cause) for these reasons? While the further extension of the boundaries made little or no immediate difference to the number of electors the additional area of his land thus incorporated in the constituency was an area where population was growing and new voters would be registered to his advantage. It is true that the proposal for the inclusion of the whole of the new district originated in a public meeting. There is no documentary evidence to prove that this was engineered by Ponsonby, Byng and their supporters but the circumstantial evidence suggests at least a strong prima facie case of jobbery on the part of the government.

The new constituency, while covering an area over thirty times its previous size, was not so 'ruralised' however as some of the boroughs re-shaped in 1832, nor was it a 'bastard constituency'.<sup>(27)</sup> There were farms in Longfleet and Parkstone but much of the area was heathland unsuitable for farming and in the process of development for housing as suburbs to the old town of Poole. Nevertheless, the boundary changes subjected the new constituency to the continuing 'rural' interest of the Lord of Canford.

#### The Electorate

In 1832 the enlarged Borough had 412 voters out of a total population of 8,216.<sup>(28)</sup> Of these, 111 were burgesses retaining their ancient rights, 235 £10 householders in the old Borough, 27 in Longfleet, 32 in Parkstone and 7 in Hamworthy.<sup>(29)</sup> This compared with an estimated electorate of 163 burgesses before 1832.<sup>(30)</sup>

Table A: Borough of Poole - Electorate and Population 1831-1852

	October 1831	December 1832	January 1835	July 1837	July 1841	1852
<u>Electors</u>						
Freemen	163	111	93	84	61	-
£10 Electors:						
Poole	-	235	260	365	241	-
Longfleet	-	27	46	83	83	-
Parkstone	-	32	39	69	51	-
Hamworthy	-	7	8	23	18	-
Total £10 Electors	-	301	353	540	393	-
Total Electors	163	412	446	624	454	508
<u>Population</u>						
St. James Parish	6459	6459	-	-	6093	6718
Longfleet	-	540	-	-	)	)
Parkstone	-	609	-	-	) 2658	) 2537
Hamworthy	-	308	-	-	)	)
Total	6459	8216	-	-	8751	9255

Poole was thus one of the 73 smaller boroughs which had electorates of up to 500 voters and was well below the average sized English borough of 810 voters.<sup>(31)</sup> As in most boroughs, the ancient rights voters were far outnumbered by the £10 voters,<sup>(32)</sup> and the majority of these voters would have qualified as £10 householders.<sup>(33)</sup>

The principal reason for the small size of the electorate in many reformed boroughs (apart from small populations) was the effect of the rating system adopted. In those constituencies where rateable values were low the number of electors was correspondingly reduced.<sup>(34)</sup> The rating in Poole was "based upon an uncertain and generally low valuation"<sup>(35)</sup> and the 1836 Rate Book shows that only 294 of the 1887 properties in the Parish of St. James were valued at £10. Since the Borough had not adopted the practice of compounding, which had the effect of disfranchising many potential voters,<sup>(36)</sup> it was the rating system which limited the size of the electorate.

The size of the electorate in Poole does not appear to have been affected by the disfranchisement of electors who did not pay their rates, as often happened under the registration system adopted after 1832.<sup>(37)</sup>

Study of the 1836 Rate Book shows that comparatively few electors could have been disfranchised for this reason. While the rates on 1057 of the 1887 properties were in arrears in November 1836, only 25 of the occupiers of properties rated at £10 or over had not paid their rates. In the absence of a poll book for the subsequent election of 1837 it is impossible to calculate precisely how many electors were disfranchised because of other defects in the registration system - the results of apathy, removals, clerical error or partisan objections - but it is unlikely to have been very many, if any at all.<sup>(38)</sup>

The Borough's electorate remained small in the period 1832-1852.<sup>(39)</sup> Nationally, the number of borough electors grew by about 50% between 1832 and 1852,<sup>(40)</sup> but in Poole the increase was less than 25%. This small increase reflects the slow rate of population growth. While the nation's population grew by about one-third in the twenty years after 1832, Poole's population grew by only just under one-eighth from 8216 to 9255 inhabitants.

This small increase reflects the inability of Poole to keep pace with the larger population growth in industrial areas, and the particular effect of the decay of the Newfoundland trade, shown dramatically in the real decline of the population of the old town in the 1830s. However, care must be taken not to exaggerate the extent of the town's economic decline. Another reason for the declining population in the Parish of St. James was the migration of better off residents into the new district, where population grew significantly throughout the period. The fact that the population of the old town did not decline seriously in the 1830s (despite the migration into the new district) indicates that the clay, timber and coastal trades provided a real alternative to the Newfoundland trade. By the 1840s these trades and the demands for services from the new district and the growing resort of Bournemouth helped to bring about a rise in the population of the old town.<sup>(41)</sup>

#### The Social Composition of the Electorate

The social pattern of the electorate revealed in Table B overleaf corresponds broadly with the findings of Dr. Nossiter in his study of 32 two member boroughs with more than 10,000 electors in 1852.<sup>(42)</sup> Its accuracy is limited by the failure to identify the occupations of a minority of the electors. It is also subject to the qualifications made by Dr. Nossiter: the reliability of directories used to provide occupational details is suspect and the grouping of occupations is heuristic.<sup>(43)</sup> Professor Vincent has stressed the difficulty presented by the frequent use of the term 'gentry' and Professor Neale has raised an important criticism concerning the homogeneity of occupational groups.<sup>(44)</sup>

Table B: Borough of Poole - Social Composition of Electorate, General Elections of 1835 and 1841<sup>(i)</sup>

	<u>January 1835</u>		<u>June 1841</u>	
	No. of Electors	% of Electorate	No. of Electors	% of Electorate
Gentry/Upper Professional	74	16.7	63	14.2
Merchants/Manufacturers	64	14.4	59	13.3
Craft	119	26.9	132	29.7
Retail Trade	64	14.4	62	14.0
Drink Trade	41	9.3	47	10.6
Farmers	23	5.2	24	6.5
Not identified	58	13.1	52	11.7
Total Effective Electorate (ii)	443	100.0	444	100.0

(i) Information on occupations taken from:

National Commercial Directory 1830, J. Pigot & Co.

National Commercial Directory 1842, J. Pigot & Co.

Printed Handbill, the Poole Election 6th January 1835.

Licensing Session 1841 (P.B.A.).

(ii) Those electors who were deceased, entered twice or otherwise disqualified have been deducted from the registered total.

As Dr. Nossiter found in a majority of his samples, craftsmen formed the largest group in the electorate. Shopkeepers in Poole were however proportionately less numerous than the average 26% of the electorate in the larger towns. The proportion of electors who were gentry or belonged to the superior professions was slightly below the average of 17% in the towns he studied. Merchants and manufacturers were a comparatively important group in the Poole electorate, larger than the corresponding groups in other ports such as Bristol, Hull and Southampton.<sup>(45)</sup> The number of Poole electors engaged in the drink trade was slightly higher than the proportion Dr. Nossiter suggests as normal in a small constituency.<sup>(46)</sup> Farmers were a larger group in Poole than in all but three of the larger boroughs in his study.

A striking feature of the electorate is the very low number of voters who can be described as 'working class'. It is possible that the deficiencies of the directories used to ascertain occupations may conceal the existence of such electors, especially amongst those whose occupations

have not been traced. In 1837, of the 84 freemen voters, 27 were not otherwise qualified as electors and allowing for a number of retired individuals in this group, some were presumably 'working class'.<sup>(47)</sup> However, the constituency was numerically dominated in 1832 and later by the craftsmen and shopkeepers. The 1850 poll book, which includes occupational details, lists only one elector described as a labourer,<sup>(48)</sup> and in 1866 the return of working class electors in the Borough showed only 17 such voters who formed the very low percentage of 3.3% of the electorate.<sup>(49)</sup>

The electorate in Poole after 1832 thus resembled the electorate of some of the larger boroughs studied by Dr. Nossiter in that it had a 'pre-industrial character',<sup>(50)</sup> which very largely excluded the working class and promoted instead craftsmen and shopkeepers. These individuals, as Professor Vincent points out, were not proletarians but small property owners.<sup>(51)</sup> Merchants and manufacturers retained a strong position in the electorate as might be expected in a port where society had long been dominated by them and where overseas trade was still of some importance. The gentry and upper professional men were also a significant group in the electorate, partly because the extension of the constituency in 1832 had incorporated the suburbs to which they were migrating.<sup>(52)</sup> The re-shaping of the Borough in 1832 had also introduced a rural element into the electorate - the farmers.

#### Voting Preferences of Occupational Groups

Table C: Borough of Poole - Voting Preferences of Occupational Groups, General Elections of 1835 and 1841

	<u>Liberal Voters</u>				<u>Conservative Voters</u>			
	<u>1835</u>		<u>1841</u>		<u>1835</u>		<u>1841</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Gentry/ Upper Professional	42	56.75	28	44.44	29	39.18	20	31.74
Merchants/ Manu- facturers	31	48.43	23	38.98	28	43.75	28	47.45
Craft	59	49.57	56	42.42	56	47.05	57	43.18
Retail Trade	43	64.06	36	58.06	24	34.78	16	25.80
Drink Trade	21	50.10	21	46.80	19	46.34	19	40.42
Farmers	16	69.56	23	79.31	7	30.43	3	10.34

Research into the electoral behaviour of occupational groups in large towns has resulted in the conclusion that "there are good grounds for believing opinion to have had a continuous relationship to occupa-

tions from 1832 onwards".<sup>(53)</sup> Shopkeepers and craftsmen were the groups showing the stronger support for Whig and Radical candidates. Second were manufacturers and merchants.<sup>(54)</sup> The drink trade was less favourable to the Whigs in general but could provide marked support for them in some constituencies.<sup>(55)</sup> Despite the tendency for the Tories "to draw somewhat more support from the upper classes" the Whigs were "predominantly the party of the upper and professional classes".<sup>(56)</sup> Dr. Nossiter's findings confirm part of the conclusion drawn by Professor Vincent from his pioneer studies of poll-books - in particular, "the tendency of the Liberals to represent the essence and core of the town - business, shopkeeping and craftsmanship".<sup>(57)</sup>

The electoral behaviour of occupational groups of electors in Poole bears some comparison with these findings. The Whig candidates relied heavily on the shopkeepers in both 1835 and 1841, although their share of votes from this group was higher than the proportion Professor Vincent suggested was general.<sup>(58)</sup> Whig candidates in Poole also enjoyed the support of the majority of the gentry and upper professional group. The drink trade favoured them too.

On the other hand, there are significant differences between the behaviour of other groups in Poole and elsewhere. The Whigs in Poole were able to attract relatively less support from the craftsmen and merchants and manufacturers. In contrast, farmers provided a source of Whig strength. These differences in voting behaviour stem from the particular effect of local influences, which both Professor Vincent and Dr. Nossiter stress.<sup>(59)</sup> The relationship between the population of the town and external influences is one major consideration. The relationship between the voters in Poole and the landed interest outside the town was in many ways the reverse of what existed in other boroughs. When the landed interest was Tory, as it often was, the Tories in boroughs were "the coalition of the 'outs', of those who could not quite be fitted in, operating under the hegemony of the outside forces of the countryside, as a fifth column within the gate of bourgeois liberalism".<sup>(60)</sup> In contrast, the Tories in Poole, a hard core of merchants and allied manufacturers and bankers, regarded themselves as the traditional and rightful leaders of the Borough, determined to resist the hegemony of the Whig manorial interest which the re-shaping of the constituency had strengthened.<sup>(61)</sup> Their influence limited the support the Whigs could draw from this group and from the craftsmen who were subject to the influence of the Tory merchants and manufacturers. Significantly, the Tories retained a majority amongst the general

merchants. These included those merchants who still had Newfoundland interests and who resented the government's refusal to protect their traditional trade. They also had the support of the majority of clerks, the largest group included amongst the craftsmen.<sup>(62)</sup>

For their part, the Whigs profited from the rural interest - not merely in the votes of the farmers but also in the votes of the gentry and upper professional group. Some of the 'gentry' living in the suburbs were open to manorial influence and the Whigs were able to retain a majority in this group, in contrast to the more usually even division between Whig and Tory strength noted by Professor Vincent.<sup>(63)</sup> Similarly, Poole lawyers and doctors did not show the strong preference for the Tories which characterised their electoral behaviour in general,<sup>(64)</sup> partly because of their deference to the landed interest.

A second important characteristic of the constituency was the large number of Dissenters in the community.<sup>(65)</sup> Belonging as they did to all levels of society in the town many were enfranchised as £10 householders. In January 1835 101 of the 340 voters who were polled were Dissenters and it was claimed that there were 140 Dissenters amongst the registered electorate of 460.<sup>(66)</sup> During a period when sectarian feelings ran high they were politically very active,<sup>(67)</sup> and in the elections of 1835 and 1841 voted almost to a man for the Whigs.<sup>(68)</sup> This massive support for the Whig candidates helps to explain the comparatively large Whig vote in Poole amongst the 'gentry' and upper professional group of which just under one-third were Dissenters in 1835. The larger than average Whig vote amongst shopkeepers is also explained by the high proportion of Dissenters (approximately one-third) in this group. Without the firm support of the Dissenters, who constituted approximately one-third of the merchants and manufacturers, and over a quarter of the craftsmen in the electorate, the Whigs would have clearly done much worse in these two groups. The Whig control of the constituency thus depended not only on the Canford influence at its strongest in the outlying districts, but also on the Dissenters' votes which were mainly concentrated in the old town.

#### The 1832 General Election

In 1832 "the mood of the nation was not one of satisfaction but of anticipation".<sup>(69)</sup> The general excitement aroused by the struggle for the 1832 Reform Act resulted in high expectations of reforms to meet the demands of all sections of society - the working class, the opponents of the Corn Laws, the Dissenters, and the Irish. It was

anticipated that the Tories and Whigs, as political parties, would disappear and that government after 1832 would rest directly on public opinion.<sup>(70)</sup>

Because of the state of public opinion, and because of the divisions in both the Tories and the Whigs since the end of Liverpool's ministry, the general election of 1832 produced a House of Commons which was markedly different from its predecessors. The Whigs enjoyed a large majority but were confronted by a large group of radicals and Irish members, anxious to secure further fundamental reforms. The latter outnumbered the Tories, who continued to be divided. A 'country party' amongst the Tories was still hostile to the Tory leadership and taking an independent attitude in the new House, was willing to join with radicals in attacking the Grey ministry on its fiscal policies, which Peel and Wellington supported.<sup>(71)</sup>

The state of politics in Poole in 1832 in many ways reflected the pattern of national politics. The Tories in the town had already shown their willingness to take an independent course, by supporting parliamentary reform and running Tulk, an independent radical candidate, against the Whig interest of the Lord of the Manor in 1831. Their independent attitude was reinforced by two developments in 1832. The granting of representative government to Newfoundland spelt the virtual end of the privileged position the Poole merchants had long enjoyed there.<sup>(72)</sup> Its effect on them was made greater by the failure of the Newfoundland trade to sustain the partial recovery it made in the 1820s. Like the Tory agriculturists in the Commons, such as Sir Richard Vyvyan, they were opposed to the trend of government's economic policy and willing to use the radicals as allies against it. The other development was the re-shaping of the Poole constituency by the 1832 Boundary Act which strengthened the threat to their power in the town, and as they saw it, the whole future of the town, by increasing the influence of Ponsonby.

The division between the Whigs and the radicals in national politics can also be traced in Poole. Some of the reformers had been uneasy at the increase in Ponsonby's influence which the extension of the parliamentary boundaries would bring. By June 1832 there were firm indications that some of them wanted Byng to retire so that they could adopt Tulk as a radical candidate, pledged to secure the ballot, triennial parliaments, the repeal of the Corn Laws, reform of the Church, retrenchment and the abolition of slavery.<sup>(73)</sup> Tulk's independence was also attractive to the reformers, who were smarting at the



Tory accusation that Poole had become 'a ministerial borough' by returning Byng in 1831.<sup>(74)</sup> Byng refused to give way however.

The Tories re-adopted Tulk for the 1832 election. They had little sympathy for his radical views, but because they were at odds with the leadership of the Tory party and calculated that Tulk would be able to detach a sufficient number of Byng's more radical supporters to ensure the defeat of Ponsonby's interest, he was their best hope at a time when enthusiasm for parliamentary reform was running so high. It was generally agreed that Lester-Lester's position in the Borough was safe<sup>(75)</sup> and the contest was very largely between Tulk and Byng.

In the campaign the Tories seized on Byng's acceptance of an Irish sinecure to emphasize his identity as a Treasury candidate unworthy of the support of true reformers, and pursued it until the poll.<sup>(76)</sup> In September they found another issue, the emancipation of the slaves, a topic clearly designed to appeal to the radicals and the numerous Dissenters in the electorate. Both Byng and Lester-Lester were attacked for their alleged lack of enthusiasm for this cause.<sup>(77)</sup>

Lester-Lester, who followed a policy of strict neutrality,<sup>(78)</sup> was occasionally forced to intervene in the "paper war" raging between Tulk and Byng. The Tories made great play with his public denial that there was any coalition between himself and Byng.<sup>(79)</sup> Despite his optimism over the result, he and his family were assiduous in canvassing the constituency.<sup>(80)</sup>

The election held on 11-12th December produced the following result:<sup>(81)</sup>

Candidate	Total Votes	Poole	Longfleet	Parkstone & Hamworthy
B.L. Lester	282 <sup>(i)</sup>	223	31	28
Sir John Byng	186	141	18	27
C.A. Tulk	168	149	12	7

## Distribution of Votes

	Poole	Longfleet	Parkstone & Hamworthy	Total
Lester Plumpers	17	3	1	21
Lester and Byng	122	17	23	162
Lester and Tulk	84	11	4	99
Byng Plumpers	3	0	3	6
Byng and Tulk	16	1	1	18
Tulk Plumpers	49	0	2	51
Total Polled	291	32	34	357 <sup>(ii)</sup>

(i) C.R. Dod, Electoral Facts from 1830 to 1853 impartially stated, H.J. Hanham, ed., (Brighton, 1972), p. 253 attributes 284 votes to Lester.

(ii) P.P. XXVII, (1833), Number of Electors enrolled, op.cit., states that a total of 360 electors were polled.

Lester-Lester thus achieved a pronounced success, leading the poll in all of the districts. His independent stance, family influence and support for parliamentary and other reforms made the strongest impression on the voters.

However, the most significant feature of this poll was the narrowness of Byng's victory over Tulk. His majority of 18 in a poll of 357 compared very unfavourably with the majority of 14 he had obtained in the 1831 poll of 98 electors. Tulk's independence and radical views had enabled him to draw off some of the voters who might otherwise have been expected to support Byng. Tulk carried the old town not only because it was the main source of Tory support and concern for the commercial interest of the Borough against the rural influence of the Manor, but also because a number of Reformers there voted for him.<sup>(82)</sup> He also did comparatively well in Longfleet, which together with Hamworthy (with its small electorate of 7) were the areas where Ponsonby's influence was strongest. It is likely that some of the voters in Longfleet who belonged to the lesser ranks of society were attracted to Tulk by his advanced religious and political views. In contrast, Tulk's result in Parkstone was comparatively disappointing since this was a district with proportionately more better-off electors, less open to manorial influence, where the Tories were building their strength. It is likely that his radicalism was too strong for some of the Parkstone electors who preferred Lester and Byng as men of more moderate views.

While Tulk's supporters were quick to blame the Canford influence for his defeat,<sup>(83)</sup> and were broadly correct in so doing, the manorial interest was not the only factor which shaped the result of this election. In the absence of a poll book it is difficult to measure exactly precisely how important the manorial influence was in 1832 but it is clear that Tulk's religious and political beliefs enabled him to detach some votes from the Reformers and limit the effectiveness of the Canford influence. At the same time his radicalism cost him the support of some voters pre-disposed to support a Tory candidate.

No precise evidence is available on the extent to which bribery and intimidation was practised in this election. The Reformers in particular were on their guard against this<sup>(84)</sup> but the impression formed is that such bribery and intimidation that took place was on the usual scale. The visit of the Revising Barrister in November 1832, which might have been the occasion for great dispute over the registration of voters, aroused comparatively little interest.<sup>(85)</sup> The evidence available suggests that exclusive dealing and the manipulation of the electoral register (especially by the Tories) was a consequence of this election rather than a feature of it.<sup>(86)</sup>

The result of the first election under the new franchise was thus the return of the two sitting members, a Whig and an independent Whig. Since the Whigs emerged from the 1832 election with the greatest advantage in numbers<sup>(87)</sup> the result for Poole may be seen in this sense as typical. In common with the electors in many constituencies, the majority of the Poole voters were supporters of parliamentary reform and Byng and Lester-Lester profited from their feelings of gratitude. Enthusiasm for parliamentary reform and further fundamental changes often went further in 1832 however and produced the great increase in the number of Radical members. Had it not been for the re-shaping of the constituency, which preserved the Whig manorial influence, this contest might well have resulted in the return of a Radical, albeit with Tory support, together with Lester-Lester. While support for the 1832 Reform Act and what it promised was the principal issue, the old question of the independence of the Borough was an important cross current in this election. Exploited by the Tories and their radical candidate, it also profited Lester-Lester and embarrassed the Reformers and Byng.

## The 1835 General Election

By 1834 party divisions in the Commons, which had been blurred latterly by the results of the 1832 election, were taking on a new definition because of the controversy over the reform of the Irish Church and the demands of the Dissenters for a final end to their inequality in relation to the established church. William IV's dismissal of the Melbourne ministry and Peel's accession to power produced a clearer distinction between the parties at Westminster.<sup>(88)</sup>

This development in Parliament was reflected in the constituencies. The Tories in Poole had reacted strongly against the demands of the Dissenters for relief from their remaining disabilities. By early 1834 sectarian differences had become inextricably interwoven with political loyalties. The Tory controlled Corporation had supported the Church and William IV's use of the royal prerogative.<sup>(89)</sup> The reformers retaliated by imploring the King to appoint ministers who would continue the work of reform.<sup>(90)</sup> Tory attempts to improve their electoral chances by a campaign of victimisation against those tradesmen opposing them and quarrels over improvements in the town had also widened the differences between the Tories and the reformers.

After the 1832 election the Tories had continued to rely on Tulk as a candidate. He now refused to stand for them, declaring that he could not support Peel's ministry. Wellington, he proclaimed, was "an Enemy to his country's Liberty and Rights".<sup>(91)</sup> The re-definition of party divisions in 1834-5 thus had a direct effect on the general election in Poole. Tulk almost certainly knew that Lester-Lester intended to announce his retirement from Parliament and could now hope to be adopted as a candidate by the reformers and Lester-Lester's interest.<sup>(92)</sup> After a brief delay, probably caused by the doubts of some of the reformers over his previous association with the Tories and his advanced religious views, Tulk was adopted by the reformers.<sup>(93)</sup> Byng also stood again. The Tories secured two Conservative candidates, John Irving<sup>(94)</sup> and James Bonar.<sup>(95)</sup>

Despite their hostility to the Canford interest which Byng represented, the Tories concentrated their attack on Tulk. Partly this was a matter of personal pique at his refusal to collaborate further with them, exacerbated by his refusal to pay the expenses of the previous campaign,<sup>(96)</sup> but it showed their realism and appreciation of the political situation in the nation. Fears of the danger to the Established Church were uppermost in the minds of most Conservative-inclined electors at this time<sup>(97)</sup> and the Tories could hope to exploit Tulk's

Swedenborgian creed and advanced political beliefs to their advantage. Their other opponent, Byng, was comparatively secure, supported as he was by Ponsonby's influence, and, in any case, the Tories comforted themselves that his Whig views were "safe" in contrast to Tulk's dangerous views.<sup>(98)</sup> Byng, for his part, tried to distance himself publicly from Tulk but the supporters of both men collaborated in the election campaign.<sup>(99)</sup> The division between the Whigs and Radicals in Poole was thus in no way as sharp as it was elsewhere during this election.<sup>(100)</sup>

The Church issue predominated in the campaign in Poole. The Tories mounted virulent attacks on Tulk, which included anti-semitic gibes against him, and even suggestions of immorality against one of the leading Dissenters supporting him.<sup>(101)</sup> Because their prime concern was to destroy Tulk's chances comparatively little was made of the Canford influence and the economic interests of the town during the campaign.

Tulk and his friends defended themselves on the Church issue and tried to keep the continuing need for reform - of the Church and the Corporations - before the electors.<sup>(102)</sup> They denounced Irving especially as a former representative of a rotten borough and opponent of parliamentary reform.<sup>(103)</sup> A pronounced feature of the contemporary handbills was the Reformer's denunciation of attempts to intimidate or bribe electors, especially the tradesmen of the town.<sup>(104)</sup>

Before the poll Bonar was forced to leave Poole because of his brother's death and at the end of the first day's polling Irving gave up the contest. Bonar also withdrew.<sup>(105)</sup> Byng and Tulk were therefore returned with 230 and 181 votes respectively as shown in the following tables:

Candidate	Total Votes	Poole	Hamworthy	Longfleet	Parkstone	Other
Sir John Byng	230	163	7	33	21	6
C.A. Tulk	181	135	6	25	10	5
John Irving	119	94	1	9	15	-
James Bonar	46	40	1	1	4	-

# Distribution of Votes

	Poole	Hamworthy	Longfleet	Parkstone	Other	Total
Byng Plumpers	4	1	4	2	-	11
Byng and Tulk	127	6	23	10	5	171
Tulk Plumpers	8	-	-	-	-	8
Byng and Irving	32	-	6	9	1	48
Tulk and Irving	2	-	-	-	-	2
Irving Plumpers	21	-	1	2	-	24
Irving and Bonar	39	1	1	4	-	45
Bonar Plumpers	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total Polled	234	8	35	27	6	310

The disappointed Tories promptly published a list of the voters, labelling their own voters as supporters of the Church and King and their opponents as voting for Dissent. They attributed their defeat to the Canford and Lester influences, "the Coalition between the Whigs and Radicals", "the influence of the Dissenting Ministers over their flocks in favour of the Reformers", "the example of the Parochial Minister in voting for the Reformers" and "the intimidation and obstruction by the Mob, on behalf of the Reformers". Their candidates, they claimed, "having been deceived by certain voters who failed to fulfil their promises after the first day's polling when the Reformers took possession of the Polling Place, retired in disgust".<sup>(106)</sup>

The number of electors who abstained from voting in January 1835 was 103 but the Reformers' denial that a further day's polling would have altered the final result appears justified.<sup>(107)</sup> In the subsequent by-election of May 1835 the Conservatives polled 57 of these abstainers and the Reformers 30<sup>(108)</sup> and it is thus unlikely that Irving would have beaten Tulk had these abstainers voted in January. The allegation that Conservative voters were forced to abstain by the intimidation of the mob also appears to have little foundation. As the Reformers pointed out, the services of the 200 Special Constables and the crew of the revenue cutter standing by in the harbour were not needed.<sup>(109)</sup> Newspaper reports indicate that while the election was lively no significant violence occurred.<sup>(110)</sup> Irving withdrew almost certainly because he

realised that he could not beat Tulk rather than because his supporters were intimidated.

There is considerable truth in the other allegations made by the Tories. The distribution of votes for Byng and Tulk supports their accusation that the Canford influence was used on their behalf. Byng especially drew significant support from outside the town. Tulk enjoyed less direct support from the manorial influence as a Radical candidate. This, and the effect of his advanced religious and political views, meant that he secured fewer votes from the more prosperous electors in the outlying districts, and noticeably no 'plumpers'. However, it is impossible to judge exactly how important the manorial influence was in shaping the result of this election because of the large number of abstentions and cross votes. Since Byng and Tulk achieved a commanding majority of the votes cast by the electors in the old town who made a choice between them and their Conservative opponents, the significance of the Canford influence is reduced. It should be stressed also, that the Conservative vote increased considerably in one outlying area, Parkstone, where their partisans were buying land and influence. (111)

The Tory complaint that the supporters of Byng and Tulk united is also upheld by the distribution of votes which gave Byng and Tulk 171 double votes. Only 2 voters crossed the party lines to vote for Tulk and of the 48 who supported Byng and Irving, only 4 may be identified as Reformers. The great majority of these cross-voters were thus Tory voters who preferred Byng to Bonar, the second Conservative candidate. Quite apart from his leaving the town before the poll, Bonar was apparently not an impressive candidate. (112)

Naturally enough in view of the theme of the election campaign, the defeated side were correct in identifying the solid vote of the Dissenters for Byng and Tulk. Their reference to the favour Lester-Lester and his family gave to their opponents was also correct, (113) although it is not possible to state how influential the Lester interest remained outside his family. Their attack on "the parochial minister" was a matter of sour grapes for the Rev. P.W. Jolliffe had long been a supporter of the Whigs and was friendly to the Dissenters.

The Poole result in this election confirms the general pattern seen in it in three respects. The Conservatives made few gains amongst the smaller borough constituencies at this time, and their gains in general have been seen as the result of a restoration of influence rather than genuine conversion to Conservative beliefs. (114) The

Reformers' grip on the small electorate of Poole through the large number of Dissenters and the Whig manorial interest was too strong for the Tories to achieve this in Poole. If the Reformers' accusations of attempted bribery and intimidation were true, the Tories in Poole had tried to use tactics which succeeded in some of the larger boroughs with large numbers of freemen electors in 1835.<sup>(115)</sup> The "low tradesmen" of Poole<sup>(116)</sup> as small men of property, seem however to have been able to withstand temptation better than the freemen electors of lower social status elsewhere. Secondly, Tulk's return contributed to the overall impression that the Radicals were comparatively successful in 1835, although he won in association with the Whig candidate, and not as his opponent, for the relationship between the Whigs and Radicals in Poole was not one of hostility as it was in many other constituencies.<sup>(117)</sup>

Thirdly, it confirmed the re-definition of political loyalties and groupings that was taking place in 1834-5. There was still an element of cross-voting amongst the Poole electors, but the election had been fought in the main between the Conservatives and a Whig-Radical alliance. The Lichfield House compact of February 1835 was to combine the Whigs with the Radicals and Irish members. As Professor Gash has pointed out "it was in fact the point of origin for the Victorian Liberal party".<sup>(118)</sup> The course of this election in Poole looked forward to this development. Just as the Lichfield House compact was one important aspect of a realisation that greater unity was necessary to support the cause of those opposed to the reinvigorated Conservatives, so the union of the supporters of Byng and Tulk had been encouraged by the need to defeat their Conservative opponents in this election.

Local circumstances meant that the result was different from the national pattern in some ways however. The political and sectarian differences were sharper in Poole than elsewhere for only 16.12% of the electors split their votes, as against a mean percentage of 18% split votes in Dr. Nossiter's sample of 11 midland and southern boroughs.<sup>(119)</sup> Secondly, the Conservative vote in Poole, at 22.58% of the total poll, was much below the average percentage of 43.4% calculated for two member boroughs.<sup>(120)</sup> The Poole Conservatives had not been well served by their candidates. They were handicapped because they were both strangers to the constituency. Irving's precipitated withdrawal and Bonar's absence prevented them from polling their maximum strength. At the same time, the failure of the local Conservative leaders to enforce greater discipline amongst their supporters argues that their party organisation in the Borough was not yet as influential as it has been judged to have been in general by 1835.<sup>(121)</sup>



### The By-Election of May 1835

This by-election was caused by Byng's elevation to the peerage as Lord Strafford of Harmondsworth. Party feeling within the Borough had remained high since the previous general election. Locally, disputes in the Parish Vestry reflected national fears of the Whigs' intentions towards the Irish Church after the Lichfield House compact.<sup>(122)</sup> Sec-tarian loyalties continued to divide the town. The Conservatives were accused of sharpening these divisions by "their tyrannical conduct and exclusive dealing since their late defeat".<sup>(123)</sup> They also continued to use their power in the Corporation to support their cause and voted a loyal address in defence of the Irish Church in 1835.<sup>(124)</sup>

The circumstances of Byng's retirement from the Borough added to the political excitement. It was rumoured that he had been elevated to the Lords to make way for Russell. The defeat of this "darling of the Democrats and petted of the Papists"<sup>(125)</sup> in the recent South Devon by-election had been greeted with joy by the Conservatives. Byng's denial that there was any arrangement to suit Russell and his declaration in favour of his son, George Byng, as his successor,<sup>(126)</sup> stirred up yet more controversy for it appeared as if he was treating the constituency as his own property to provide a seat for his son who had recently lost the government borough of Chatham.<sup>(127)</sup> The Reformers delayed adopting Byng's son, apparently hoping that Russell would come forward.<sup>(128)</sup> He would be a more prestigious candidate than Byng, one of more radical views and one whose choice would not leave them so open to the charge that the Borough was being flagrantly used by Strafford. Russell eventually made it clear that he would not stand and George Byng who had already offered himself to the electors therefore became the reform candidate more by default than by the positive wish of the Reformers.<sup>(129)</sup>

The Conservatives too had difficulty in choosing a candidate. Irving was approached but refused to stand again.<sup>(130)</sup> The Mayor, Robert Slade, also declined for fear of damaging his business interests.<sup>(131)</sup> Eventually they chose Lt. General Sir Colquhoun Grant of Frampton House, Dorset.<sup>(132)</sup>

In the very brief election campaign the Conservatives concentrated on attacking their opponents for surrendering the independence of the Borough by accepting Byng.<sup>(133)</sup> Grant who promised, in the manner of Peel, "to carry into effect the spirit of that Reform which is now the law of the land" and tried to reassure the Dissenters of his concern for their rights,<sup>(134)</sup> was attacked as an opponent of parliamentary reform

and associate of "that rank Tory", the Duke of Cumberland.<sup>(135)</sup> In fact, Grant was able to stay in Poole only very briefly, being forced to return to London because of his daughter's elopement with Richard Brinsley Sheridan.<sup>(136)</sup> His brother, Lt. Col. James Grant, then undertook to represent him, claiming to be a reformer who could vouch for the General's principles.<sup>(137)</sup>

The poll, delayed for 24 hours by the Sheriff who clearly hoped to favour Grant's chances of success, resulted in Byng's victory by 25 votes in a high turn-out of 373 of the 414 effective registered voters.<sup>(138)</sup>

Candidates	Total Votes	Poole	Hamworthy	Long-fleet	Park-stone	Other
The Hon. George Byng	199	143	7	29	14	6
Lt. Gen. Sir C. Grant	174	140	-	11	19	4
Total	373	283	7	40	33	10

The Conservative Dorset County Chronicle hailed the result as "a nominal defeat but virtual triumph for the Conservatives", claiming that Grant's absence and manorial interference had given Byng his narrow victory.<sup>(139)</sup> The distribution of votes indicates Byng's pronounced indebtedness to the Canford influence in Hamworthy and Longfleet but demonstrates too the continued growth of Conservative support in Parkstone. The Reformers were forced to admit that they had lost the support of "a few soi-disant Reformers whose principles were too weak to resist temptation" and claimed they had suffered from the abstention of other voters who feared intimidation by their opponents. They insisted however, that "a corps de reserve" of 25 voters remained unpolled for Byng.<sup>(140)</sup>

Examination of the voting behaviour of those electors who abstained from the poll in May 1835 shows that the claims that intimidation had a serious effect on the Reformers polling strength and that there were as many as 25 votes held in reserve were wishful thinking. Of the 10 voters who voted in January 1835 and in the general election of 1841 but abstained in May 1835, only 4 were Liberal voters, 2 split their votes and 4 voted Conservative. Of 8 voters who abstained in both elections in 1835 but voted in 1841, 6 were Liberals, 1 Conservative and 1 split his vote. Since few voters actually changed their political allegiances

between the elections of January and May 1835 - 10 became Conservative and 8 became supporters of Byng - the Reformers' claim that they had lost support because of bribery by the Conservatives also appears unjustified. The comparatively large Conservative vote in May 1835 came from their success in polling 57 electors who had abstained in January, while the Reformers were able to bring out only 30 of these electors for Byng.<sup>(141)</sup>

The achievement of the Conservatives in running Byng so closely in this election was the more significant considering the difficulty their candidate experienced and the brief election campaign. It is possible that they had improved their organisation since the previous contest but it was more likely that they profited from the resentment against Byng as the nominee of his father. This raised again very forcibly the issue of the independence of the Borough and reduced Byng's majority amongst the voters in the old town to only 3. In addition, there were indications that Byng's comparative youth and personal conduct aroused criticism of him.<sup>(142)</sup> The Conservatives were also able to concentrate their votes for one candidate in May 1835, whereas in January some Conservative votes had been given to Sir John Byng in an effort to keep out Tulk.

With a weak candidate the Reformers in Poole were forced to rely more heavily on the manorial interest in May 1835. The comparatively narrow result helped prompt them to improve their organisation and a branch of the Reform Association was formed in June. The Conservatives followed suit by inaugurating a Conservative Association in the following week.<sup>(143)</sup> The by-election had served to confirm the continued hardening of political divisions in the nation.

#### The General Election of July 1837

By 1837 the Whig ministry had been greatly weakened. It had failed to satisfy the Dissenters and the Irish. It could not overcome the hostility of the House of Lords. It was losing its parliamentary majority and its sense of purpose.<sup>(144)</sup>

In Poole the supporters of the ministry had also suffered severe reverses. The elections for the Town Council had resulted in a triumph for the Conservatives which the House of Lords had confirmed by their rejection of the Bill designed to redress the grievances of the Reformers over the elections. However, the Liberals in Poole, as elsewhere,<sup>(145)</sup> rallied their remaining strength. By March 1837 when the prospects of a general election came closer there were nevertheless indications that their morale and state of preparedness was weak. By then the Conservatives

were confidently seeking two candidates<sup>(146)</sup> and significantly the Salisbury Journal, whose correspondent was generally favourable to the Liberal side, remained silent about the future of Byng and Tulk.

Both men eventually retired from Poole. Byng returned to Chatham, one of the few 'Government Boroughs' still existing, where he could expect an easier life.<sup>(147)</sup> Tulk gave up politics. Like Byng he presumably found Poole politics too demanding and it is possible that he had quarrelled with some of his more radical supporters in the Borough.<sup>(148)</sup> They were replaced as Liberal candidates by Charles Ponsonby, the son of the Lord of the Manor,<sup>(149)</sup> and Sir George Philips who had married into the Cavendish family.<sup>(150)</sup> The Conservatives chose Sir John Walsh, Bart., and Sir Henry Willoughby, Bart.<sup>(151)</sup>

There was evidently some prospect that the weakness of the Liberals would bring about a compromise at the poll resulting in the return of Ponsonby and one of the Conservative candidates but nothing came of this eventually.<sup>(152)</sup> Ponsonby's candidature naturally meant that the campaign tended to concentrate on the issue of the Borough's independence. Both Conservative candidates attacked the manorial influence trenchantly while the Liberals counter-attacked the behaviour of the Town Council and held out the promise of further reform "from a Government true to the great principles of Civil and Religious Liberty".<sup>(153)</sup> As elsewhere in this election, the Liberals made full use of the Queen's name during the campaign in an attempt to stem the decline in their fortunes.<sup>(154)</sup>

The poll resulted in a victory for Ponsonby and Philips who gained 278 and 259 votes respectively against 242 and 222 votes for Willoughby and Walsh.<sup>(155)</sup>

No poll book has yet been found for this election but the return of electors made later in 1837 provides the following information:<sup>(156)</sup>

	Total	Parish of St. James	Hamworthy	Long- fleet	Park- stone	Free- men
Registered Voters	624	365	23	83	69	84
Voters Polled 1837	504	348	11	66	53	26

The number of electors registered and polled was thus considerably higher than in previous or subsequent elections in this period.<sup>(157)</sup> It reflected the success of the Conservatives in particular in adding new electors to the register in November 1836, when it was alleged that they had divided property amongst their servants and paid the rates due in

order to qualify them as electors, a method similar to that used by the Anti-Corn Law League later.<sup>(158)</sup> There were significantly larger numbers of electors than before in the Parish of St. James and Parkstone where the main strength of the Conservatives lay. However, while the newspaper report suggested that the Conservatives had the greater success in this strategem, the increase in the electorate in Hamworthy and Longfleet indicates that the Reformers were also able to add some of their potential supporters to the register.

The Conservatives were not able to maintain their initial advantage however. They blamed their defeat on "the unparalleled corruption and the most outrageous bribery", the perjury of electors and "manorial intimidation".<sup>(159)</sup> A petition against the return of Ponsonby and Philips was initiated but later abandoned.<sup>(160)</sup> This election certainly had an especially unsavoury reputation locally. A newspaper article of 1868 recalled that both sides were free with bribes but Ponsonby spent very heavily.<sup>(161)</sup> It is likely that it was a particularly corrupt election since the addition of many more voters to the register meant that more of the electorate were drawn from the lower orders who were most open to bribery.<sup>(162)</sup> The Liberals in particular would have needed to make more use of bribery in order to overcome the initial advantage enjoyed by their opponents.

In the absence of a poll book it is difficult to judge precisely how much use was made of the manorial influence but the attention paid to it in the campaign and the narrow margin of votes in the poll argue that it was a vital consideration in checking the Conservative attack in the constituency. It was another means by which the Conservative advantage could be overcome by the Liberals.

In broad terms the Poole result for 1837 coincides with the general pattern of this election in which the Liberals held on in, or won, borough seats and the Radicals declined. The Liberals achieved this in face of an enthusiastic Conservative attack, encouraged by the successful defiance of the Lords to government measures in 1836.<sup>(163)</sup> The Liberals in Poole had faced an equally vigorous Conservative effort.

But the manner in which the Poole Liberals held on to the parliamentary seats differed to an extent from the national pattern. Nationally the Liberal successes have been seen as the result of their high morale and attention to local organisation, including the use of their control over the town councils.<sup>(164)</sup> In Poole, however, the morale of the Liberals was comparatively low at this time. Their energies were being

dissipated in an exhausting struggle against the Conservative control of the Town Council. In this process their organisation also appears to have weakened and they had allowed their opponents to gain the initial advantage in the registration of voters. Their position in 1837 in fact resembled the state into which Dr. Close had argued the Liberals as a whole fell in the period after 1837.<sup>(165)</sup> The Poole Liberals were thus forced to rely more heavily on bribery and the manorial influence in 1837.<sup>(166)</sup> Tulk, the Radical member, was not succeeded as some hoped by another Radical,<sup>(167)</sup> not so much because the Liberals in Poole were becoming more discriminating (as has been suggested was the case nationally)<sup>(168)</sup> but because they were in no position to reject the offers of two aristocratic candidates with influence and money. Local conditions were thus important in shaping the precise course of this election in the Borough but the disappearance of Tulk and the strength of the Conservative attack reflected developments in national politics.

The 1841 General Election

Between 1837 and 1841 the fortunes of the political parties in the Borough had been dramatically transformed. The Conservatives had exhausted themselves in defending their position on the Town Council and the Liberals had finally gained control of it in November 1840. The Liberal recovery meant that they were able to check the registration of Conservative voters and gain an advantage for themselves.<sup>(169)</sup> The total number of registered electors decreased from 624 in 1837 to 454 in 1841. Significantly it was the number of electors in the old town and Parkstone, the two main areas of Conservative strength, which diminished most. In contrast, the numbers in Longfleet and Hamworthy, where manorial influence was strongest, remained virtually the same.<sup>(170)</sup>

The morale and organisation of the Conservatives understandably suffered. They offered no resistance to the Liberals at the Municipal Elections in November 1840,<sup>(171)</sup> and apparently made little or no preparations for the 1841 General Election. Ponsonby and Philips announced their intention of standing again early in June, as soon as it was clear that Parliament would be dissolved,<sup>(172)</sup> but Captain G.P. Rose,<sup>(173)</sup> the Conservative candidate, did not come forward until 26th June shortly before the poll. He admitted that he was standing "at the eleventh hour" and referred to the request he had received from "friends possessing influence in the neighbourhood", instead of claiming to be brought forward by the Poole Conservative Association.<sup>(174)</sup> He was

immediately attacked by the Liberals as "a nominal candidate", intent on practising in Poole the acts of borough management his family had long practised in Christchurch.<sup>(175)</sup> The Conservative Dorset County Chronicle did not conceal its pessimism over the likely result of the Poole contest<sup>(176)</sup> - in great contrast to the confident tone it had adopted during the campaign in 1837.

The relative position of the two parties in Poole was the reverse of what was obtained in national terms. The Whigs were in disarray,<sup>(177)</sup> and many of the ministers regarded the appeal to the country as a last desperate throw.<sup>(178)</sup> The Conservatives, urged on by successive by-election victories between 1837 and 1841, were confident.<sup>(179)</sup>

The Poole election was held on 30th June with the following result:<sup>(180)</sup>

	Total Votes	St. James Parish	Ham-worthy	Long-fleet	Park-stone	Out-side
Hon.C.F. Ponsonby	228	142	11	52	20	3
G.R. Philips	209	131	10	48	17	3
G.P. Rose	192	122	6	29	34	1

#### Distribution of Voters

	Total	St. James Parish	Ham-worthy	Long-fleet	Park-stone	Out-side
Ponsonby Plumpers	2	1	-	1	-	-
Ponsonby/Philips	202	127	10	45	17	3
Ponsonby/Rose	24	14	1	6	3	-
Philips Plumpers	2	2	-	-	-	-
Philips/Rose	5	2	-	3	-	-
Rose Plumpers	163	106	5	20	31	1
Total	398	252	16	75	51	4

Rose did well, polling 48.2% of the vote, in spite of the brevity of his campaign and the other disadvantages he faced. His share fell just below the mean Conservative percentage of the poll in two member English boroughs of 48.8% in this election.<sup>(181)</sup> The result for Poole coincided also with the borough results in general in 1841 since the principal Conservative gains amongst the boroughs were the larger constituencies such as the City of London, Hull and Leeds.<sup>(182)</sup>

Nationally the issues which historians have seen in this election were the future of the Corn Laws and Protection, discontent over the Whig's ineptitude in dealing with the problems of the economy and the social unrest, including controversy over the Poor Law.<sup>(183)</sup> Little documentary evidence has survived to indicate how far these issues featured in the Poole election. Although it has been suggested that the Corn Law issue did not arouse much interest in the nation as a whole<sup>(184)</sup> it appears to have been an issue in the Borough. Petitions for the repeal of the Corn Laws had been sent up from the town in May 1841 and the Liberals pressed the issue during the election.<sup>(185)</sup> Their candidates were not agreed on the question. Philips came out for Repeal while Ponsonby contented himself with supporting the proposed amendment of the laws.<sup>(186)</sup> It is likely that the more radical amongst the Liberals were responsible for promoting the issue in support of the Anti-Corn Law League, and on balance the Liberals probably profited from the question as they did in other boroughs.<sup>(187)</sup> The related subject of reductions in the sugar and timber duties, which Philips also championed and Rose denounced, alarmed the national mercantile interests concerned.<sup>(188)</sup> This issue may well help to explain the loss of support for the Liberals in 1841 amongst the merchants in the electorate, who included timber merchants. On the other hand, the Liberal candidates presumably profited from radical support for the attack on Protection.

Rose and his supporters attacked the Poor Law but it is unlikely that he gained any significant support on this question. The middle class Radicals in the town remained supporters of the Liberal candidates because the constituency was essentially different from the larger industrial boroughs where Radicals and Chartists allied with Conservatives against the Poor Law and the Whig administration in 1841.<sup>(189)</sup> For them the answer to the problem of poverty was not the repeal or amendment of the Poor Law but the repeal of the Corn Laws and economical government which would prevent "the 'Roses' from eating our Bread and devouring the Wages of Labour and the Profits of Trade".<sup>(190)</sup>

Thus the Liberal cause in the Borough did not suffer from the hostility of the Radicals. Nor was it affected by the decline of enthusiasm amongst its partisans which Dr. Close has identified as the most important cause of the Conservative triumph in 1841.<sup>(191)</sup> As far as can be judged the issues of the Corn Laws and Protection did not



ultimately lead to a net loss of votes for the Liberal candidates. The principal explanation of the comparative success Rose achieved in face of his difficulties must therefore lie in the general lack of confidence in the Whig administration amongst the electors. As Professor Gash has stressed, they failed to provide effective policies or leadership.<sup>(192)</sup> In contrast, Peel and the Conservatives promised competent government.<sup>(193)</sup>

While some of the Poole electors rejected the aristocratic Whig Ministry in this way, the distribution of votes in the 1841 election demonstrated the continued importance of the Whig manorial influence in helping to prevent the Conservatives from capturing at least one of the parliamentary seats. However, while the Liberal voters in Hamworthy and Longfleet continued to outnumber the Conservatives there, and in Parkstone, the Liberals also had a slim majority in the old town, as a result of their efforts in the registration of voters. The Canford influence was thus a contributory but not an absolute reason for the success of the Liberals in 1841.

The pattern of electoral politics in the Borough from 1832 to 1841 provides much evidence that the 1832 Reform Act did not produce revolutionary changes in political life. Despite the increase in the number of voters, admittedly somewhat limited in Poole, Lester-Lester's personal interest not only survived but flourished in the 1832 election. Although he said that he retired in 1835 because of the difficulties of representing the reformed constituency, had he been a younger and more determined individual he could have continued to sit for the Borough. Bribery continued in elections and although firm evidence of the scale of its use is understandably lacking, the 1837 election was particularly corrupt.<sup>(194)</sup> Exclusive dealing and other forms of political pressure were clearly used as well in this constituency, as elsewhere.<sup>(195)</sup> For example, inn and ale-house keepers normally voted according to the political persuasion of the owners of their houses.<sup>(196)</sup>

The most clear evidence of the continuity in constituency politics before and after 1832 is the way in which the manorial interest not only survived but was extended after 1837 to control both parliamentary seats. The existence of the Canford interest raises the question of whether Poole should be classified as a family or proprietary borough. As defined by Professor Gash, "a family borough was one which almost invariably returned a member of a particular family in the neighbourhood

not merely because of the direct influence of their property but also from motives of local feeling, personal popularity, and respect for the family connexion", while "a proprietary borough was one that was so much under the control of one proprietor that the electors would return not only him or a member of his family but if necessary any one whom he chose to put forward in his interest".<sup>(197)</sup>

The course of elections in the constituency in these years indicates that it was in part a proprietary borough. Byng, his son and G.R. Philips owed their return to an extent to the manorial interest Ponsonby gave them. But the constituency was not completely subject to the Canford interest. Until 1837 this interest was forced to share the representation of the Borough with Lester-Lester and Tulk who represented an independent and radical influence respectively. There are indications too that the Liberal supporters in the old town district felt some resentment against the manorial influence, because it came from outside the town and because it was a Whig interest unwilling to accept all of the radical aims of reform. In addition, the real significance of the Canford interest in shaping the results of particular elections varied according to the inter-play of other circumstances. It was far more important in 1832, the by-election of 1835 and the election of 1837 than it was in the general elections of 1835 and 1841. Moreover, both Byng and Philips appear to have established a degree of support for themselves separate from the Canford interest. The manorial interest was thus not a completely dominant influence in the constituency. Its later history confirms this. It retained little power after the sale of the Canford estate to Sir John Guest in 1846. Ponsonby (then Lord de Mauley), was anxious that Guest should take over his political interest, but despite Guest's efforts he was unable to secure the election of his nephew in 1847. He was defeated by G.R. Robinson, a Liberal-Conservative with strong Poole connections. Philips, however, was re-elected.<sup>(198)</sup>

Professor Gash's definitions of the forms of aristocratic influence do not quite fit the special circumstances affecting the Poole constituency, where there was a tradition of loyalty to the independence of the town and where the supporters of the reform cause had mixed feelings towards the Whig influence of the Lord of the Manor. Such mixed feelings - of deference towards the aristocracy and assertions of independence - were characteristic of the urban middle class at this time.<sup>(199)</sup> The fact that the Canford interest was a Whig

interest and the need that the Reformers in Poole had for the assistance of this interest, not only in parliamentary elections, but in their struggle against Conservative control of the new Town Council, were special local considerations. They produced a somewhat different pattern in the relationship between the town and the Lord of the Manor than that which can be recognised elsewhere. In some towns the period from the 1820s to the 1840s was "a time of crisis and confrontation" with the local aristocracy.<sup>(200)</sup> Poole was one of the places where collaboration between an important element in the town and the aristocracy continued until later. During this period it can be argued that the Reformers in Poole, in making use of the Canford interest to help break the Conservative hold on the Town Council, and assist in the return of a radical M.P., were adapting a traditional aristocratic influence to help them realise their aspirations towards a complete reform of society.

Thus, it is not possible to accept that Poole was a totally proprietary borough. At the same time it must be recognised that the manorial interest was reinforced by the Boundary Act of 1832 and that it played a more important part in the politics of the town after the Reform Act. While the supporters of reform made use of it to advance their aims they naturally had to pay a price for its assistance - to accept that bribery and territorial influence should continue to be used in elections. On balance therefore, the Canford interest helped to preserve continuity in the political life of the constituency after the Reform Act.

In broad terms, the history of elections in Poole between 1832 and 1841 reflects the pattern of national politics in these years. The confusion in party loyalties, latterly caused by the Reform crisis, was reflected in the state of the parties in Poole. By 1835, when the lines dividing parties nationally were being re-drawn, the Whig-Radical alliance emerged in Poole to meet the challenge of the reinvigorated Conservatives.

To the extent that local circumstances, such as the large number of Dissenters amongst the electors or the relative state of the morale and organisation of the parties, contributed to the course and outcome of elections, politics in the constituency remained local. This was a matter of degree however. It has been argued that "a new national consciousness was being forged ... which had already, by the thirties and

forties, begun to find limited expression in the electoral system of the big towns".<sup>(201)</sup> The way in which national concerns played some part in the general elections of 1832, 1835 and 1841 especially, in the Borough, suggests that this consciousness was beginning to have some influence in smaller urban constituencies like Poole as well.

1. For example, Charles Seymour, Electoral Reform in England and Wales, the Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise, 1832-1885, (Yale University Press, Newhaven, 1915), pp. 131-2, 165, 197; N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, pp.x-xii.
2. M. Brock, The Great Reform Act, pp. 335-6; J. Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, pp. 254-263; D.C. Moore, 'The Other Face of Reform', Victorian Studies, V, (1961-2), pp. 7-34; Idem, 'Concession or Cure: The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act', Historical Journal, IX, (1966), pp. 39-59.
3. T.J. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, Case Studies from the North East 1832-1874, (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1975), p. 2.
4. Brock, op. cit., p. 137.
5. Ibid, p. 265; Cannon, op. cit., p. 229.
6. Brock, op. cit., pp. 141-2.
7. P.P., XXXVI, (1831-1832), Melbourne's Instructions to the Boundary Commissioners, 8, 23rd August, 1831, 0.39.
8. Gash, op. cit., p. 70.
9. P.P., XXXVIII, 141, (1831-2), Reports from Commissioners on Proposed Divisions of Counties and Boundaries of Boroughs, Part II, pp. 143-5.
10. 2 and 3 William IV, Cap. 64.
11. P.P., XXVIII, 238, (1837), Reports of the Commissioners appointed to report and advise upon the Boundaries and Wards of Certain Boroughs and Corporate Towns, Part III; J. Sydenham, The History of the Town and County of Poole, pp. 228, 273-4, 450.
12. W. Mate, Then and Now or Fifty Years Ago, p. 111.
13. P.B.A., Poole Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 20th February, 1832; S.J., 27th February, 5th March, 1832; Dorset County Chronicle, 22nd February, 18th March, 1832.
14. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, Resolutions of a Public Meeting, 21st February, 1832.
15. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'An Old Inhabitant', 29th February, 1832.
16. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 21st February, 1832, op. cit.
17. S.J., 5th March, 1832.
18. D.C. Moore, The Politics of Deference, A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System, (Harvester Press, Hassocks, Sussex, 1976), pp. 174-7, 179-80.
19. Cannon, op. cit., p. 246.

20. Gash, op. cit., p. 28; Brock, op. cit., pp. 147, 216 and note 61, p. 368.
21. Gash, op. cit., p. 26; E.P. Hennock, 'The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act: A critical note', Victorian Studies, XIV, (1971), pp. 321-7.
22. Moore, The Politics of Deference, op. cit., p. 235.
23. P.B.A., The 1836 Rate Book for the Parish of St. James, Poole, includes 22 properties belonging to Ponsonby with a total rateable value of only £119.
24. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 38, B. Lester-Lester to John Bingley Garland, 25th August, 1832.
25. Brock, op. cit., p. 136.
26. Mate, op. cit., pp. 91-101, 103-5.
27. Gash, op. cit., pp. 68-73. The new constituency of Poole compares favourably with one of the most notorious 'ruralised boroughs', the Borough of Wareham. The area of this constituency was enlarged over forty times its original size to 13,950 acres, more than twice the area of the new Poole constituency. (P.P., XXXVI, 232, (1831-2), p. 2, Return of Estimated Superficial Extent in Acres). Moreover, much of the Wareham constituency was truly rural.
28. P.P., XXVII, 189, (1833), p. 180, Number of Electors Enrolled. (See Table A, p. 237 above).
29. S.J., 26th November, 1832.
30. P.P., XXXVI, 112, (1831-2), p. 80, Voters Polled and Number of Freemen.
31. Gash, op. cit., p. 81.
32. Ibid, pp. 96-7.
33. P.P., XLIV, 329, (1837-8), p. 296, Return of Number of Freemen showing other qualifications if not Municipal Electors.
34. Nossiter, op. cit., p. 163.
35. P.P., XXXVI, 444, (1831-2), p. 59, Return of Proportions to the Rent or actual Value at which Parochial Assessments are made.
36. Seymour, op. cit., pp. 149-56; Brock, op. cit., pp. 325-6.
37. Seymour, op. cit., pp. 144-5.
38. Ibid, pp. 23-4, 113-22; J. Alun Thomas, 'Registration and the Development of Party Organisation 1832-70', History, XXXV, (1950), pp. 82-93. The registered electorate in 1837 was 624, of whom 504 were polled. (P.P., XLIV, 329, (1837-8), p. 73, Electors Registered returned to address dated 30th November, 1837). This was a significantly larger electorate and poll than in other elections between 1832 and 1852 (See Table A) and suggests that far from potential voters being disfranchised on this occasion, the process of ...

38. cont.  
... registration had resulted in a number of non-qualified individuals being enfranchised. There is no direct evidence to confirm this suggestion however.
39. See Table A, p. 237.
40. Gash, op. cit., p. 77.
41. D. Beamish, J. Dockerill, J. Hillier, G. Smith, An Album of Old Poole, 'Industry and Commerce'.
42. Nossiter, op. cit., pp. 164-7 and Table 20, 'Social composition, two member English boroughs, 1832-66'.
43. Ibid, p. 165.
44. J.R. Vincent, Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted, (Cambridge, 1967), p. 54; R.S. Neale, Class and Ideology in the 19th Century, (1972), p. 62.
45. Nossiter, op. cit., pp. 165-7 and Table 20.
46. T.J. Nossiter, 'Aspects of electoral behaviour in English constituencies, 1832-1868', in Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology, (1970), E. Allardt and S. Rokkan, eds., p. 171. It is likely that the number of those engaged in the drink trade was higher than average because Poole was a port.
47. P.P., XLIV, (1837-8), op. cit.
48. Poole Election, September 1850, Printed Poll Book.
49. P.P., LVII, 170, (1866), pp. 47-51, Return of the Several Cities and Boroughs in England and Wales, arranged in order according to the Proportion of Electors belonging to the Working Classes on the Register. (This return places Poole second from bottom in the order of the number of working class voters).
50. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, op. cit., p. 167.
51. Vincent, op. cit., p. 6.
52. These individuals remained strongly represented in other constituencies because there they had "not yet begun their suburban retreat". T.J. Nossiter, 'Aspects of electoral behaviour in English constituencies', op. cit., p. 171.
53. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, op. cit., p. 170.
54. Ibid, pp. 168-9 and Table 22, Percentage Liberal support among occupational groups in designated two member 'large towns' 1835-57.
55. Nossiter, 'Aspects of electoral behaviour in English constituencies', op. cit., p. 171.

56. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, op. cit., pp. 167-8.
57. Vincent, op. cit., pp. 14-5.
58. Ibid, p. 15.
59. Ibid, p. 24; Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, op. cit., p. 172.
60. Vincent, op. cit., p. 15.
61. Professor Vincent points out that in Liverpool and Bristol the business community was influenced by the threat of popular radicalism to become "the party of order". (Ibid, p. 21).
62. Of the 16 electors in 1835 described simply as 'merchants', 9 voted Conservative and only 5 Liberal. In 1841 of the 13 'merchant' electors, 11 were Conservative and only 1 Liberal. Of the 14 clerks registered in 1835, 10 were Conservative and 4 Liberal. In 1841 9 clerks voted Conservative and 5 Liberal.
63. Vincent, op. cit., p. 19.
64. Ibid.
65. The religious census of 1851 showed that 4,380 individuals attended Anglican worship and 2,202 Dissenting worship. (I am indebted for this information to Mr. T.A. McDonald, who has recently been awarded an M.Litt. by Bristol University for his thesis on 'The Electoral History of Poole, 1832-1885').
66. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'A Real Friend to the Town', December 11th, 1834 and the 'Poole Election', 6th January, 1835. (Mr. T.A. McDonald informs me that 110 of the 249 electors in 1859 were Dissenters and 5 Roman Catholic).
67. G.I.T. Machin, Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1832-1868, (Oxford, 1977), pp. 40-47.
68. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'The Poole Election', 6th January, 1835. Calculations of the voting of Dissenters in the 1841 General Election made from printed Poll Book, Poole Election, Wednesday June 30th, 1841. (D.C.R.O. Photocopy).
69. N. Gash, Aristocracy and People, Britain 1815-1865, (1979), p. 156.
70. Ibid, pp. 156-7.
71. Ibid, p. 158; N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-1852, p. 124; B.T. Bradfield, 'Sir Richard Vyvyan and the Country Gentlemen 1830-1834', E.H.R., Vol.LXXXIII, (1968), pp. 729-743.
72. N.McLintock, The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland 1783-1832, pp. 124 et seq.



73. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'A Grateful Reformer', 2nd June, 1832; 'Independent Voter', 4th June, 1832; 'Candidus', 4th June, 1832; 'A Reformer', 27th June, 1832.
74. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'Common Sense', 26th June, 1832.
75. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 38, Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 19th July, 1832.
76. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'Sinecure Places', 23rd July, 1832. Joseph Hume, the noted radical M.P., became involved in the controversy over Byng's appointment as Governor of Londonderry and Culmore. (See, for example, Printed Handbill including a letter from Hume, 28th August, 1832).
77. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'A Dissenter', 3rd October, 1832; 'Investigator', 5th November, 1832.
78. B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 25th August, 1832, op. cit.
79. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, B.L. Lester, 28th August, 1832.
80. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 38, B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 9th August, 1832.
81. S.J., 17th December, 1832; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'A Despiser of Hypocrisy and Tyranny', Undated.
82. S.J., 15th December, 1834; Mate, op. cit., p. 116.
83. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'A Despiser of Hypocrisy and Tyranny', op. cit.
84. The Reformers announced on 7th December 1832 their intention to publish evidence of the intimidation of tradesmen and bribery after the poll. (Printed Handbill). This apparently never appeared.
85. S.J., 12th November, 1832.
86. D.C.R.O., D. 365, F. 38, B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 8th February, 1833.
87. Brock, op. cit., p. 316.
88. Gash, Aristocracy and People, op. cit., pp. 159-61.
89. Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 24th November, 1834.
90. Dorset County Chronicle, 27th November, 4th December, 1834; S.J., 1st December, 1834.
91. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, The Letter of Charles Augustus Tulk, 22nd November, 1834.
92. B. Lester-Lester to J.B. Garland, 8th February, 1833; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, B. Lester-Lester, 6th December, 1834. (Lester-Lester was unwilling to continue his exertions on behalf of the enlarged electorate, especially because of the bitterly divided state of the town. He died in Paris, 1838).

93. S.J., 8th, 15th December, 1834. (The Conservative Dorset County Chronicle suggested that "the Conservative Whigs" would support the Conservative candidates because of Tulk's radical views, 11th December, 1834. A Conservative Handbill, 'Semper Fidelis', 17th December, 1834, suggested that Tulk's committee were worried by his religious beliefs).
94. John Irving, merchant, M.P. for Bramber 1806?-1832, unsuccessfully contested Clitheroe 1832, elected for Antrim 1837 and 1841, died 1845, (F.H. McCalmont, McCalmont Parliamentary Poll Book of all Elections, 1832-1918, (1971 edition, Brighton), pp. 5-6, 239; Printed Handbills, John Irving and James Bonar Address, 6th December, 1834; 'An Elector', 3rd January, 1835).
95. James Bonar, merchant. (P.G.M., Printed Handbill, John Irving and James Bonar Address, op. cit.); McCalmont, op. cit., p. 239, errs in describing him as T. Bonar.
96. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'Senex', 18th December, 1834.
97. D. Close, 'The Rise of the Conservative in the Age of Reform', B.I.H.R., Vol.XLV, (1972), pp. 89-103.
98. Dorset County Chronicle, 1st January, 1835; Printed Handbill, 'A Real Friend to the Town', 11th December, 1834.
99. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'A Real Conservative', 9th December, 1834.
100. Philip Ziegler, Melbourne, a Biography of William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne, (1976), p. 187.
101. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'A Fine New Jerusalem Pony', Anon., Undated; 'The Chameleon Candidate', Anon.; 'Saint Joseph', Anon.
102. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'C.A. Tulk', 9th December, 1834; 'C.A. Tulk', 18th December, 1834.
103. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'An Elector', 3rd January, 1835.
104. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'A Lover of Independence', 12th December, 1834; 'Coquin', 15th December, 1834; 'Junius', 16th December, 1834; 'A Friend to Liberty', 1st January, 1835.
105. Poole Historical Trust Collection, 'An Account of the Election of Two Representatives in Parliament for the Borough of Poole, with a Report of the Speeches and a List of all Voters ... 6th and 7th January', Pamphlet, (Poole, 1835), pp. 12, 20, 28.
106. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'The Poole Election', 6th January, 1835.
107. 'An Account of the Election of Two Representatives in Parliament', op. cit., pp. 31-2.
108. P.G.M., Poole Election, May 1835, Printed Pollbook.
109. 'An Account of the Election of Two Representatives in Parliament', op. cit., p. 30.

110. The Salisbury and Winchester Journal for 2nd January 1835, reported that one member of the public was accidentally injured in the crowd at the reading of the proclamation dissolving Parliament. The Conservative Dorset County Chronicle for 8th January 1835, stressed the noisy excitement at the nomination of the candidates but gave no specific details of violence.
111. B.L. Lester to J.B. Garland, 8th February, 1833, op. cit.
112. 'An Account of the Election of Two Representatives in Parliament', op. cit., p. 12. (It is, of course, also possible that manorial influence persuaded some of these cross -voters to give one vote for Byng).
113. Benjamin Lester-Lester and his family gave 4 votes to Byng and Tulk and one vote to Tulk. ('An Account of the Election of Two Representatives in Parliament', op. cit.).
114. Close, op. cit., pp. 90-2.
115. Ibid, p. 91.
116. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'A Friend to Liberty', 1st January, 1835.
117. John Prest, Lord John Russell, (1972), p. 85.
118. Gash, Aristocracy and People, op. cit., p. 161.
119. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, op. cit., p. 178 and Table 27.
120. Ibid, p. 182, Table 29.
121. Close, op. cit., p. 95.
122. Dorset County Chronicle, 9th April, 1835.
123. S.J., 11th May, 1835.
124. P.B.A., Poole Corporation Monthly Meeting Book, 8th April, 1835.
125. Dorset County Chronicle, 7th, 14th May, 1835.
126. S.J., 11th May, 1835.
127. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, op. cit., Appendix G, p. 444 and note 12; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'John Baron', Undated.
128. S.J., 18th May, 1835.
129. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, J. Russell to Henry Kemp, 12th May, 1835; Marquis of Tavistock to Hon. George Byng, 13th May, 1835; George Byng, Address, 11th May, 1835. (Russell was elected for Stroud in May, 1835; J. Prest, op. cit., p. 93).
130. S.J., 11th May, 1835.
131. Ibid, 18th May, 1835; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, Robert Slade to William Thompson, 9th May, 1835.
132. Dorset County Chronicle, 14th May, 1835. Lt. Gen. Sir Colquhoun Grant (1772-1835) had a distinguished army career, was M.P. for ...

132. cont.  
... Queensborough 1831-2 and inherited the Frampton estate from his brother-in-law in 1833. (J. Hutchins, History of Dorset, Vol.II, pp. 297-8, 302).
133. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'An Elector', 14th May, 1835.
134. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, Sir C. Grant, Address, 14th May, 1835.
135. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'Is Sir C. Grant a Reformer?', Undated.
136. Earl of Malmesbury, Memoirs of an Ex-Minister, An Autobiography, (2 vols., 1884), Vol.1, p. 66. (R.B. Sheridan was the grandson of the dramatist).
137. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, Lt. Col. James Grant, Address, 19th May, 1835.
138. P.G.M., Poole Election, 1835, Printed Poll Book.
139. Dorset County Chronicle, 28th May, 1835.
140. S.J., 25th May, 1835.
141. Calculations based on the Poll Books for January and May, 1835, and June, 1841.
142. Dorset County Chronicle, 28th May, 1835.
143. S.J., 15th, 22nd June, 1835.
144. Gash, Aristocracy and People, op. cit., pp. 169-74; Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 174-5.
145. Close, op. cit., p. 99.
146. S.J., 13th March, 1837.
147. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, op. cit., Appendix G, pp. 444-6.
148. Dorset County Chronicle, 9th March, 1837.
149. Charles Frederick Ashley Cooper Ponsonby (1815-1896), M.P. for Poole 1837-1847, Dungarvan 1851-2. Succeeded father as 2nd Baron de Mauley 1855. (G.E. Cockayne, The Complete Peerage, Vol.IV, p. 176).
150. Sir George Richard Philips, Bart. (1789-1883) came of a mercantile family and had sat for Horsham, Steyning and Kidderminster. M.P. for Poole 1837-1852, (S.F. Woolley, 'The Personnel of the Parliament of 1833', E.H.R., Vol.LIII, (1938), pp. 240-62; W.R. Williams, The Parliamentary History of the County of Worcester, (Hereford, 1897), p. 185).
151. Printed Handbill, 24th June, 1837. Sir John Benn Walsh represented Sudbury until his defeat there in 1835. Elected for Sudbury 1839 and Radnorshire 1840. Later Lord Ormonthwaite. (Dod, op.cit., pp.258, 298; McCalmont, op. cit., p. 243). Sir Henry P. Willoughby, M.P. for Newcastle under Lyme 1832-1835, unsuccessfully contested Northampton 1841, was elected as a Liberal-Conservative for Evesham in 1847 and sat until his death in 1865. (McCalmont, op. cit., p. 210).

152. Dorset County Chronicle, 29th June, 1837.
153. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, G.R. Philips, Address, 22nd June, 1837.
154. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 'The Queen and Liberty. The Queen and the Constitution. The Queen and Reform', 17th July, 1837; 'An Elector of Longfleet', 19th July, 1837; N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-1852, op. cit., p. 23. Willoughby took 48.8% of the votes cast. The average Conservative vote in 2 member boroughs in 1841 was 45.7%. (Nossiter, op. cit., Table 29, p. 182).
155. S.J., 31st July, 1837.
156. P.P., XLIV, 329, (1837-8). p. 73, Electors Registered, return to Address dated 30th November, 1837.
157. See Table A, p. 237 above.
158. S.J., 7th November, 1836; Norman McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League 1838-46, (second edition, 1968), pp. 150-155.
159. Dorset County Chronicle, 27th July, 1837.
160. Ibid, 30th November, 14th December, 1837; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'Departed this Life', 22nd March, 1838.
161. Poole Pilot, 17th October, 1868. 'The Electoral History of Poole'. (Poole Reference Library).
162. Seymour, op. cit., pp. 170-1.
163. Close, op. cit., pp. 95-7.
164. Ibid, pp. 98-9.
165. Ibid, pp. 99-101.
166. It was the 1841 general election which earned the reputation of being an especially corrupt election in national terms. (Seymour, op. cit., p. 174).
167. Dorset County Chronicle, 23rd March, 1837. It reported a rumour that the Poole radicals wished J.S. Poulter, the Radical M.P. for Shaftesbury, who had played a leading part in the parliamentary struggle over the Poole Council election, to stand.
168. Close, op. cit., p. 98.
169. S.J., 9th, 30th September, 1839.
170. See Table A, p. 237 above.
171. Dorset County Chronicle, 5th November, 1840.
172. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, C. Ponsonby, Address, 7th June, 1841; G.R. Philips, Address, June, 1841.
173. Captain George P. Rose was the eldest son of George Henry Rose and grandson of the younger Pitt's election manager.
174. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, G.P. Rose, Address, 26th June, 1841.
175. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, 25th, 28th June, 1841.

176. Dorset County Chronicle, 1st July, 1841.
177. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832-1852, op. cit., p. 183; Close, op. cit., pp. 99-101.
178. Betty Kemp, 'The General Election of 1841', History, Vol.XXXVII, (1952), pp. 146-157; Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 337-8.
179. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832-1852, op. cit., pp. 145, and note 1, 146.
180. Calculations based on the printed poll book for this election, published by Lankester, Poole. (Photocopy in D.C.R.O.). Many different totals of votes cast for the candidates have been published (e.g. Dorset County Chronicle, 1st July, 1841 gives Ponsonby 224, Philips 204 and Rose 189. Dod, op. cit., p. 253 gives 231, 211 and 189 respectively and states the date of the poll as 1st July).
181. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, p. 182, Table 29.
182. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832-1852, op. cit., p. 135; Kemp, op. cit., p. 156.
183. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832-1852, op. cit., pp. 146, 178-183, 186; Kemp, op. cit., pp. 150-155; Close, op. cit., pp. 100-103.
184. Kemp, op. cit., p. 151.
185. P.B.A., Poole Council Minute Book 1841-1847, 5th May, 1841; Dorset County Chronicle, 13th May, 1841; P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'The Corn Laws, An Address to All Parties', 23rd June, 1841.
186. P.G.M., Printed Handbills, C. Ponsonby, Address, 7th June, 1841; G.R. Philips, Address, June, 1841.
187. Close, op. cit., p. 102. (The issue appears to have had no effect on the way in which farmers voted in Poole. They remained obedient to the manorial interest. Table C, p. 240).
188. Annual Register, 1841, p. 144; Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 331-5.
189. Kemp, op. cit., p. 155; Close, op. cit., pp. 102-3.
190. P.G.M., Printed Handbill, 'To G.P. Rose, Esq.', 28th June, 1841.
191. Close, op. cit., pp. 100-101.
192. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832-1852, op. cit., pp. 186-7.
193. Ibid, p. 144; Kemp, op. cit., p. 157.
194. It was perhaps the experience of this election in Poole which resulted in the Borough apparently featuring in tri-partite negotiations in 1839 between a borough-monger, Bonham, the Conservative election manager, and Sir James Graham who was looking for a ...

194. cont.

..... seat for his nephew. (Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, op.cit., pp. 164-6, and note 17, p. 165).

195. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, op. cit., pp. 174-176.

196. James and Joseph King, Liberal brewers in Poole, owned the King's Arms, the Rising Sun and the London Tavern. Lester-Lester owned the Old Antelope and W.F.S. Ponsonby the New Inn. Their tenants voted for Liberal candidates. John Adey, a Conservative brewer, owned the Globe, the Brewer's Arms, the Bell, the Old Inn, the Poole Arms, the Royal Oak and the King and Queen. His tenants supported Conservative candidates. See 1836 Rate Book and Poll Books for 1835 and 1841 General Elections, op. cit.

197. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, op. cit., p. 193.

198. The Earl of Bessborough, ed., Lady Charlotte Guest, Extracts from her Journal 1833-1852, (1950), pp. 172-3, 183, 187-9, 192, 195-6.

199. David Cannadine, Lords and Landlords: the Aristocracy and the Towns 1774-1967, (Leicester, 1980), p. 38.

200. Ibid, pp. 46-7.

201. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, op. cit., p. 185.

## CONCLUSION

While much of the recent published work on urban history has been focussed on the thesis of an urban crisis in the late medieval and early modern periods,<sup>(1)</sup> significant advances have also been made in the history of towns in the years after 1660. Analyses of the demography, economy and physical growth of urban society have provided a clearer view of the evolution of provincial towns from the late 17th century onwards.<sup>(2)</sup> It has been estimated that by 1750 the urban population of England and Wales had doubled over the previous century and that by this date approximately one quarter of the total population lived in towns of 2,500 inhabitants or more.<sup>(3)</sup> Nearly half of these people lived in London but many provincial towns were also expanding. The growth of these towns was uneven. Because of the importance of colonial trade in the growth of commerce in the period 1700-1775, more rapid urban development took place amongst the ports best suited for overseas and coastwise trade, such as Whitehaven.<sup>(4)</sup> Those ports like Liverpool which also became industrial centres, experienced the fastest rate of growth. The increasing volume of internal trade from the late 17th century was another important reason for urban growth. It resulted in the development of regional centres of distribution such as Chester or Worcester which grew more rapidly than average sized market towns.<sup>(5)</sup> By the beginning of the 18th century a few towns, especially spa towns like Bath and Tunbridge Wells, had begun to emerge as specialist centres of leisure and recreation.<sup>(6)</sup> However, by 1760 most towns of any size made some provision to meet the demand for luxury goods and services catering for leisure.<sup>(7)</sup>

The greater political stability of the late 17th century and the increase in the surplus wealth available for the enjoyment of luxuries was responsible for this latter development.<sup>(8)</sup> In particular, the towns were catering for the needs of an expanding group of 'pseudo-gentry'. The 'urban gentry' amongst them were individuals possessing independent incomes, without country estates, who preferred to live a life of leisure in towns. Their tastes were shared by an increasing number from the middle ranks in urban society, the growing number of professional men and merchants who enjoyed some independent income and a partially leisured existence. They built elegant town houses, bought luxury goods such as perfume and fine watches and patronised assembly halls, theatres, public walks and other fashionable resorts of polite society.<sup>(9)</sup> The marked development of these tastes has prompted Peter



Borsay to conclude that from c. 1680 onwards "a transformation was occurring in the nature of provincial urban culture, which with some justification could be called an urban renaissance".<sup>(10)</sup>

The town of Poole shared in the economic and demographic growth of provincial towns in the century and a half after 1660, primarily because of its prominence in the Newfoundland trade, and to a lesser extent its importance in the coasting trade. Its population growth was slower than that of numerous other ports however. This came about partly because of the particular nature of the Newfoundland trade. Many of those engaged in the trade worked in Newfoundland itself and only passed through Poole on their way to and from the fisheries.<sup>(11)</sup> The bulk of the principal product of the trade, the cod fish, was sent directly to overseas markets from Newfoundland and its handling thus created no additional employment in Poole. The collapse of the trade in the early 19th century also curbed the growth of the town's population then. By then Poole's lack of an industrial hinterland seriously limited its future development.<sup>(12)</sup>

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that the town's culture was evolving in the manner described by Borsay. It is seen in the 'mansion houses' built for Poole merchants from the early 18th century. By the mid-century "the leading citizens appear to have vied with each other in building imposing residences".<sup>(13)</sup> The most successful merchants moved from small houses close to the quays of the port to these larger houses situated in more salubrious surroundings on or near the northern boundary of the town. No specific record of the existence of a 'Poole Assembly', for dancing, cards and conversation, appears until 1773 but the Town House, the merchants' club, built in 1727, was apparently used for such social occasions previously.<sup>(14)</sup> A Freemason's Lodge was established in 1765<sup>(15)</sup> and a theatre in use by 1769.<sup>(16)</sup> Sea bathing had been taken up by 1745 and from 1759 there were attempts to institute a Poole 'season' which would attract fashionable society to the town for the bathing.<sup>(17)</sup> There is also evidence of the existence of a demand for luxuries. For example, four watchmakers were at work in the town by the mid-18th century.<sup>(18)</sup> This is understandably a more modest record of cultural growth than that to be found in county towns such as Northampton, or cathedral cities like Canterbury or Exeter, which had many advantages denied to Poole, a workaday port.<sup>(19)</sup> Moreover, until the enclosure of Canford Heath in the early 19th century, the area covered by the town remained more or less confined to the tip of the

peninsula on which it had grown up. There was little room for public walks, imposing squares, let alone a race course. Despite this a more polite society was emerging in the town.

These fundamental changes in the size and nature of urban society in provincial towns from the late 17th century brought new pressures on those responsible for municipal government. There was a need for them to promote local commerce and industry to ensure that their towns did not lose opportunities to profit from the general growth of prosperity. They also faced increasing demands for the provision of a wider range of social amenities, especially the lighting, paving and cleansing of streets and an adequate watch service.<sup>(20)</sup> Town corporations were often ill-equipped or unwilling to respond to these new pressures and from the mid-18th century resort was made increasingly to bodies of improvement commissioners to undertake the provision of new amenities or remedy the inadequacies of harbours especially.<sup>(21)</sup> As Professor Keith-Lucas has pointed out, the Improvement Commissions were not always effective in carrying out their duties,<sup>(22)</sup> but the large number created after c.1750 indicates that they were accepted as the best means of securing better amenities in urban life.<sup>(23)</sup> In turn, their use had profound consequences for many municipal corporations which became even more emphatically private bodies, further removed from the real needs of the communities they decorated.<sup>(24)</sup> The corporations were thus made more vulnerable to the charges of irresponsibility and abuse made against them by the Commission of Inquiry in 1835.

A few corporations escaped this decline in their status and authority. The merchants of Liverpool, who dominated the corporation there, retained overall control of local government after the passage of improvement legislation. This was also true of Hull Corporation.<sup>(25)</sup> In both places municipal government was efficient by the standards of the time in spite of the oligarchic composition of their corporations. In Liverpool, "municipal administration ... in 1835, however much it may have fallen short by modern standards, was far more comprehensive, honest, efficient and enterprising than the contemporary average; in fact it is doubtful whether Liverpool Corporation could have made such progress as it did in subsequent years if it had not been for the achievements of the old pre-1835 Council".<sup>(26)</sup> The Corporation of Hull also interested itself in the provision of public amenities and there "The total environment thus created was by the standards of the time, one of which the Bench and all concerned might be reasonably proud - as indeed they were".<sup>(27)</sup>

Poole Corporation also took a wider view of its public responsibilities than most other corporations, primarily because of the concern its members felt for their economic interests in the port. The Corporation's action in securing the 1756 Improvement Act reflected this concern, but the inclusion of provision for the lighting and watching of the town shows that the Corporation was also willing to go some way towards meeting the changing needs of society. It was able to avoid losing status and power after 1756. The reservation of control over the harbour dues to the Corporation meant that the principal concern of the community remained wholly within its control. The Corporation was able to retain effective but not absolute power over the provision of lighting and watching.<sup>(28)</sup> It was thus comparable with the Corporations of Hull and Liverpool. In Hull, "the chief reason for ... efficient local government was the continuing unity of political and economic power in the hands of competent and public spirited men",<sup>(29)</sup> - the merchants of the port. In all three ports the personal interests of the merchants prompted them to ensure that the harbour and quays were administered efficiently, but they also showed concern for other public amenities. There were differences in the extent to which they pursued this interest. In this respect, Poole Corporation does not compare so favourably with Liverpool in particular. The Corporation there was more active in promoting public health, education and controlled building development.<sup>(30)</sup> Hull Corporation was also probably more active than Poole in regulating house building.<sup>(31)</sup> Nevertheless, this was a matter of degree and there was a fundamental difference between these three corporations and the very many decayed and irresponsible municipal bodies which had been "preserved solely as political engines" to elect parliamentary representatives.<sup>(32)</sup>

The collapse of the Newfoundland trade in the early 19th century did not prevent society in Poole from continuing to evolve in a more polished manner. A new theatre was opened in 1805 and by 1809 the Poole Assemblies had become a regular feature of its social life.<sup>(33)</sup> After the Royal Yacht Club had held a season in Poole Harbour in 1826 an annual Town Regatta was inaugurated.<sup>(34)</sup> Leading merchants initiated some of the developments in the cultural life of the town. The Dis-senters amongst them sponsored a Lancastrian day and evening school in 1812.<sup>(35)</sup> George Garland was active in promoting the Poole Bible Society<sup>(36)</sup> and his family was closely concerned with the formation of a Bethel Union, "for bettering the moral and religious condition of that

useful class, the mariners".<sup>(37)</sup> The Garlands were prominent too in the foundation of a public library in 1830.<sup>(38)</sup> Other merchants were responsible for the beginning of a Mechanics Institute in 1832.<sup>(39)</sup>

Since the leading members of the Corporation were affected by the growing sophistication of life in the town this helped to shape their attitude towards their responsibilities in municipal government. The cruder methods of administration employed by the Corporation for much of the 18th century were no longer fully acceptable to them as society became more polished. The administrative reforms achieved by the Corporation in the early 19th century stemmed in part from a realisation that the old methods no longer suited the changing ethos of society at this time. In broad terms it responded favourably to the needs to adjust its methods and meet the community's expectations of improvement in local amenities. It is very significant that the supporters of municipal reform in Poole were not concerned initially with criticism of the Corporation's performance of its municipal functions - they were primarily concerned with the political aspect of the Corporation, its exclusive enjoyment of power. In Poole, therefore, the interaction between the cultural growth of the community and the behaviour of the Corporation was pronounced.

A further aspect of the urban renaissance from the late 17th century described by Borsay is the emergence of urban consciousness "sharply defined from that of rural society". Borsay admits that this new urban consciousness became "an additional not an alternative strand" in the cultural outlook of town-dwellers.<sup>(40)</sup> The state of society in Poole provides support for this qualified argument. Poole merchants, and their subordinates in the Newfoundland and allied trades, had long kept contact with rural Dorset and neighbouring counties, primarily to obtain supplies of labour and some of the goods needed for their trade. As the trade grew these contacts became more important and reduced the comparative isolation of the port from its hinterland. However, the merchants were the superior parties in the relationship with their rural suppliers<sup>(41)</sup> and the tempering effect of these contacts with rural society on urban consciousness were limited. Clear evidence of a recognition of the separation between urban and rural society comes from the history of the relationship between the Corporation and the Lord of the Manor. In the 18th century this resulted in a long struggle over land rights in which the Corporation eventually defeated the threat to the harbour and the danger that the town's inland development would be impeded. After Ponsonby had become Lord of the Manor the struggle was renewed because his rurally based influence was seen as a threat to the independence and commercial future of the town.

The emergence of this urban consciousness is related to the growth of provincial self consciousness which has been charted by Donald Read. He has described how provincial towns, especially those growing up in the industrial areas of the Midlands and the North, gained in self-confidence not only because of their economic success but from the development of communications between them and with London, the spread of provincial newspapers, the achievement of local improvements by means of improvement commissions and the influence of Dissenters.<sup>(42)</sup> By the 1780s this "new urban provincial spirit" began to exert an influence in national politics, initially through the General Chamber of Manufacturers.<sup>(43)</sup> Subsequently provincial opinion played an increasingly significant part in demands for reform, in the campaign against the slave trade, the early 19th century controversy over the regulation of foreign trade, and the parliamentary reform movement.<sup>(44)</sup> After the achievement of parliamentary reform, it was the provinces which were the mainstay of Chartism<sup>(45)</sup> and the Anti-Corn Law League.<sup>(46)</sup>

The self consciousness of the provinces rested in part on the growth of local pride which in turn depended on the improving quality of social life. Lord Briggs has described how early 19th century Birmingham profited from an "active social life which centred around church and chapel, theatre and ring, platform and home".<sup>(47)</sup> This resulted in the encouragement of local improvements and a serious interest in politics in Birmingham.

Naturally, provincial self consciousness, and the aspirations for improvement and reform which it inspired, were felt more keenly in the rising industrial towns. Their rapid growth presented more immediate social and economic problems. They were frequently without separate parliamentary representation or municipal government. Nevertheless, older and smaller urban communities also gained greater self confidence and began to demonstrate a spirit of independence in their attitude to national politics. The provincial reform movement of the 1790s was at its strongest in large centres like Manchester and Sheffield but it affected smaller towns such as Rochester and Tewkesbury.<sup>(48)</sup> The attack on the monopoly of the East India Company was supported by most commercial centres in the provinces.<sup>(49)</sup> The demand for parliamentary reform excited the whole country. Within towns which already possessed corporate government the demands for the widening of the membership of corporations, and improved local government, continued as political awareness spread in the middle ranks of society.

Society in Poole was affected by the growth of provincial self consciousness. The leaders of the Corporation began to lay greater emphasis on the independence of the Borough in electoral politics in the early 19th century. They now came forward more frequently as parliamentary candidates and when elected, often adopted an independent stance in politics.<sup>(50)</sup> The radical movement of the 1790s found some support in the town. Town meetings in the early 19th century supported many of the reform causes of the day - the opposition to the East India Company's monopoly and the Corn Law and the attempts to secure reforms in criminal law and the emancipation of the slaves.<sup>(51)</sup> Leading members of the Corporation took part in these activities. In this manner the merchants of Poole were expressing similar aspirations to those of the manufacturers and merchants of Birmingham and Manchester.

There was a significant difference however between the aspirations of the majority of the Poole merchants and their social and economic equivalents in Birmingham, Manchester and many other industrial centres. The manufacturers and merchants there lacked distinctive local representation in Parliament or corporate local government. The Poole merchants enjoyed both and, for most of them, their concern for reform was inevitably of a different nature. They were anxious to use the opportunities which direct parliamentary representation and municipal government gave them to obtain more advantages for their interests, and to an extent, for the community they governed. Their priorities were thus different from those of their equivalents in the industrial towns where the manufacturers and merchants, although very much alive to the need for reform in such matters as the regulation of overseas trade, had first to achieve enfranchisement by parliamentary and municipal reform.<sup>(52)</sup>

Nevertheless, the struggle for enfranchisement was also a feature of the internal politics of Poole. It was seen in the conflict between the Corporation and the householders of the Commonalty, who sought to join the Corporation and thereby also gain the parliamentary franchise. Poole Corporation was a more active and enlightened body than most municipal corporations but like them it remained before the Municipal Reform Act "something like a private club".<sup>(53)</sup> This resulted from the oligarchic basis of the old corporations and the jealous manner in which they guarded their prescriptive rights and property. In the 18th century it was exceptional if a corporation was not controlled by the elite of the local community.<sup>(54)</sup> The domination of the Poole merchants over the Corporation was therefore to be expected. The exact degree of

oligarchy in municipal government varied from borough to borough, depending on many circumstances. For example, Poole Corporation was in one sense less oligarchical than other corporations because there was no provision for a Common Council in its constitution. On the other hand, it was more oligarchical than other municipal bodies because admission to it depended solely on gift or purchase at the wish of its existing members. There was no provision for admission by apprenticeship and the number of burgesses or freemen was therefore much smaller than in some other boroughs such as Leicester or Liverpool.<sup>(55)</sup> Their privileges were enhanced by the reservation of the parliamentary franchise to the burgesses and the electorate was correspondingly much smaller than in most boroughs where the freemen alone enjoyed the franchise.<sup>(56)</sup> Poole Corporation was also quick to defend its prescriptive rights - over the parliamentary franchise and the rights of presentation to the Parish Church.

However, it was far from being a completely exclusive body. The merchant oligarchy was willing in the earlier 18th century to admit some of its dependents and some of the large number of Dissenters in the town to the Corporation. Its willingness to do so depended partly on the economic and social basis of the community. The nature of the town's staple trade until its decline in the early 19th century is important. The Poole merchants were involved not only in the organisation of long voyages to North America, the West Indies, the Mediterranean and Europe, but in the control of the population of Newfoundland itself. Their trade remained generally very lucrative until its sudden collapse and during the 18th century the merchants had the satisfaction of gaining control of the major British share in the Newfoundland trade. The oligarchy which dominated the Corporation thus enjoyed a fundamental unity and common purpose, despite their inevitable personal disagreements. This gave them a measure of confidence as rulers of the local community and enabled them to admit some of their dependents to a share of power in the Corporation. This willingness to share their authority was reinforced by the nature of society in the town. It came to be so narrowly dependent on the Newfoundland connection that there were comparatively few avenues for advancement in society outside this trade and its off-shoots. Society in Poole thus had a large degree of cohesion - it may even be regarded as a large ship in which most of the population acted as the crew under the command of the leading merchants acting as captains. Confident of the deference of their social and economic inferiors the merchants oligarchy could afford to enfranchise some of them.

The disputes between the Corporation and the Commonalty beginning in 1774 demonstrate however that there were definite limits to the oligarchy's willingness to share its privileges. The Commonalty agitation began not only because the economic and social development of the town had the effect of increasing the number of those wishing to join the Corporation but also because the Corporation itself was beginning to behave in a more exclusive manner. It is true that the Corporation was later willing to resume the admission of a larger and more representative selection of new members, and the pressure from those aspiring to join the Corporation was moderated by the extension of the parliamentary franchise in 1832, but the issue between the Corporation and those excluded from its ranks was not finally ended until the dissolution of the old Corporation in 1835.

There were short term reasons for the Corporation's refusal to meet the claims of the Commonalty, or to admit larger groups of new members. The Commonalty agitation began at the same time as the conflict with the American colonists. The American War caused great anxiety amongst the merchants because of the threats it appeared to hold for their trade and economic power. It also contributed to divisions within the merchant elite. In these circumstances, the leaders of the Corporation, nervous about their own future prosperity and ability to retain control of the Corporation, refused to make any concession to the demands of the Commonalty. Similarly, the effrontery of the Commonalty in supporting their own candidates in the 1774 election impaired for the time being the confidence the merchant oligarchy customarily had in the deferential attitude of society in the town.

In the longer term, the Corporation's resistance to the claims of the Commonalty may be seen as a traditionally conservative response to a threat to its prescriptive rights, akin to its reaction to other attacks on its privileges, from the Tory gentry of Dorset in the 17th century, and from the Lord of the Manor and the Borough of Wareham in the 18th century. There were two new elements however in the conflict with the householders of the Commonalty. The challenge to the Corporation's rights came not from outside but from within the town. Secondly, the supporters of the Commonalty quickly adopted radical ideology to justify their claims. For all but one or two of the members of the Corporation this aspect of growing political awareness was too strong to be acceptable in the 18th century.



By the early 19th century circumstances had changed. The leaders of the Corporation had regained their earlier confidence in their ability to uphold the Corporation's rights and their own power within it, especially after their experience in the recent dispute with the Lord of the Manor. They were therefore willing to admit more members to the Corporation and make it more representative of the town's community, while still rejecting in principle the claims of the Commonalty. One group in the Corporation, the Garland interest, was willing to go further. Its leaders had come to view radical aspirations more sympathetically because they were confident that a further broadening of the Corporation's composition and the extension of the parliamentary franchise would strengthen their ability to assert the independent interests of the community.<sup>(57)</sup> Their attitude reflected a greater self-confidence and awareness of how the distinct interests of the local community might best be served than their opponents in the Corporation possessed. It makes it possible to compare them more closely with the merchants and manufacturers in the industrial towns, where the influence of provincial self consciousness in prompting assertions of local interests and demands for constitutional reform is seen most clearly. Like the leaders of the parliamentary reform movement in Birmingham especially,<sup>(58)</sup> the Garland interest looked forward to securing the co-operation of their social inferiors in the cause of reform because of the nature of society in the town.

The Garland interest in the Corporation did not press home this initiative however after 1815. As a parliamentary interest, organised in support of Lester-Lester, it continued to represent the advocates of reform in general. In municipal affairs, while it remained an important influence for administrative reform, and also helped to achieve the significant widening of the Corporation's membership in 1830, it did not force the issue of the admission of the ratepayer householders. George Garland's conservatism in his later years, Lester-Lester's diffidence and the partial satisfaction of the householders by the more generous admissions made in the period were responsible for the issue being skirted. Poole Corporation thus remained ultimately vulnerable to the most important charge made against the old corporations by the Commissioners in 1835 - that they "look upon themselves and are considered by the inhabitants as separate and exclusive bodies".<sup>(59)</sup>

The Commissioners of the Inquiry into the Municipal Corporations were guilty of bias in their work. Their report failed to recognise that in some boroughs "such as Liverpool - self election and inefficiency

were not necessarily synonymous".<sup>(60)</sup> Because they were so insistent on applying the Benthamite principle that there must be a complete correspondence between the interests of the governors and the governed<sup>(61)</sup> they concluded that "Even where these Institutions exist in their least imperfect form, and are most rightfully administered, they are inadequate to the wants of present day society".<sup>(62)</sup> Professor Keith-Lucas, one of the few historians who have studied the Commissioners' work in detail in recent years, accepts that they were biased but agrees with their general conclusions. Their report, he has said, "exaggerates here and there and generalises sometimes too widely, but the mass of evidence of how the corporations had been corrupted is overwhelming".<sup>(63)</sup> He sees the principal cause of their decay as stemming from their function as "electoral colleges". This had come to take priority over their other functions and resulted in their corruption and irresponsible conduct.<sup>(64)</sup>

The Corporation of Poole had shown greater responsibility in carrying out its functions in local government than many other corporations and is comparable with the best of them - Liverpool and Hull Corporations. It had ultimately been willing to open its ranks and make itself more representative of the community it governed. For much of its history since 1740 it had not allowed its functions in parliamentary elections to distract it from its other responsibilities. In the final analysis however, it must be agreed that by 1835 it was no longer adequate "to the wants of the present state of society".<sup>(65)</sup> After 1832, the Corporation had become more exclusive in its attitude, primarily because the interest controlling it sought to use the Corporation and the other organs of local government, the Parish Vestry and the Board of Guardians, as means of preserving their power in the community. After the extension of the parliamentary franchise in 1832 the Corporation could no longer act as an electoral college as such, but the Conservatives were clearly attempting to exploit their advantage in the Corporation to regain control over one of the parliamentary seats. While they retained some interest in improvements for the town, the struggle for power took priority during the very last years of the old Corporation. Above all, those controlling the Corporation could not accept that it was now necessary to extend the boundaries of the Borough and include the new suburbs to provide adequate local government for the community. They were forced to oppose this because of their fears that the hostile influence of the Lord of the Manor and those who supported him would destroy their authority and the independence of the town, as they understood it. Forced to accept municipal reform, they succeeded

in prolonging the struggle for power in the new Council. The particular circumstances in Poole thus had the general effect of making a mockery of the intentions of the authors of municipal reform, who had been convinced that local government under popular control would be responsible and economical.

The growth of urban and provincial self consciousness by the late 18th century had advanced the political awareness of urban communities and made them question their relationship with electoral interests belonging to central government or magnates outside the boroughs. It would be, however, a gross over-simplification of the history of the electoral system to suggest that there were no signs of this questioning of external influences before the late 18th century. The researches of Namier and his successors have made it clear that borough constituencies were capable of independent behaviour in elections much earlier in the century. The precise degree of independence shown naturally varied from place to place. At the lowest level, the tactic of making a show of independence was used in order to drive the best bargain with a would-be candidate or patron.<sup>(66)</sup> Elsewhere, notably in corporation boroughs such as Bath or Salisbury, there were genuine independent feelings because the members of the corporations there "were sufficiently well-to-do and imbued with corporate pride and dignity".<sup>(67)</sup>

The Corporation of Poole failed to show a comparable degree of independence in its electoral behaviour in the early 18th century. Its willingness to accept the influence of government in elections at this time contrasts with the broader view of its responsibilities in local government that the Corporation adopted.

However, it was not to be expected that it would behave as independently as Bath or Salisbury because there were fundamental differences between the state of economic and social development in Poole in the first half of the 18th century and that in the other two towns. Bath experienced rapid growth as a resort, especially from 1700, and its population soon outstripped that of Poole.<sup>(68)</sup> Its rulers naturally gained in self-confidence and pride because Bath attracted visitors from the cream of society. Salisbury's share of the cloth industry had declined during the 17th century but the city continued to enjoy many advantages over Poole in the early 18th century. Its population, although declining, was still far larger than Poole's. It retained its importance as a county and cathedral city, and as a market centre for a wide area.<sup>(69)</sup> In contrast, Poole's economic growth was slow in starting in the 18th century because it was not until the 1720s that the Newfoundland trade began to improve after a long period of depression. There

was thus a period of delay before the merchants controlling Poole Corporation could acquire sufficient pride and self-confidence to display a more pronounced independence in their behaviour as an electorate. The attempts of John Masters to secure election to Parliament for Poole was a sign that some of the Poole merchants were gaining in political awareness by the mid-century however.<sup>(70)</sup>

The attitude of the Corporation to government electoral influence was also affected by the dependence of the port on a complex and demanding overseas trade. The experience of the Newfoundland merchants in the late 17th century and the early years of the 18th century had taught them that they needed to stand well with the government of the day in order to gain its protection for their economic interests. During the first half of the 18th century this recognition of the importance of government favour was a strong influence on the merchants, disposing them to defer in general to the wishes of the administration in elections. Moreover, it was during this period, when their trade was growing, that government made its strongest and most successful attempts to build electoral interests, especially in boroughs such as Poole where the Customs and Revenue Officers were available for this purpose. The first half of the 18th century may therefore be regarded as a time of political tutelage for Poole. The Corporation as a whole lacked the political confidence and expertise to challenge government influence and assert its independent interests fully in parliamentary elections. At the same time, it was sufficiently alive to the local needs of the port's increasing trade to begin to use its power in local government to meet these needs.

The relationship between the merchants and government was not a straightforward one of clients and patron however, even at this stage of the town's development. When ministers appeared to neglect or endanger the interests of the Newfoundland trade, those merchants who felt most aggrieved were willing to protest by opposing the administration. As the Newfoundland trade continued to prosper, the relationship between the merchants and central government became more complex. The tendency to defer to government continued to influence the behaviour of the trade to some degree until it finally became clear in 1832 that government would no longer support the merchants' traditional privileges in Newfoundland. This tendency was at its strongest during wars, when the interests of the trade were most clearly threatened, but even at these times government measures caused grievances in the trade which brought

opposition within the Corporation. Thus the Poole merchants were divided during the American War, despite its dangers to their interests, partly because of hostility to Palliser's Act of 1775. In contrast, the merchants of Liverpool were noticeably united at this time.<sup>(71)</sup>

During the Napoleonic War, the parlous state of the Newfoundland trade in 1809 contributed to the election of an opposition member for Poole.

There was an ambivalence, therefore, in the attitude of the merchants to their relationship with the administration. As business men, used to calculating risks in their trade, they also calculated the relative advantages in deferring to government or expressing opposition to it.

One consideration which complicated their attitude to government was the anomalous status of Newfoundland and its government. Despite the economic and strategic importance of the Newfoundland trade, the island itself was not regarded as a colony proper until the early 19th century. Until fundamental reforms in its administration were carried out then, its government rested with the naval officers in command of the Newfoundland squadron, appointed from year to year and resident only during the fishing season.<sup>(72)</sup> This inadequate form of government was superimposed on the power of the West Country merchants and their representatives in the island. Their extensive privileges in the conduct of the fisheries were recognised by the Newfoundland Act of 1699. During the 18th century, and especially from the 1750s, the British government extended the scope of civil administration in Newfoundland. These measures, such as the attempts to strengthen the administration of the customs, were resented by the merchants. However, the changes government sought to make were piecemeal and halting. In addition, it was often possible for the merchants to prevent the measures from being carried into effect because of the rudimentary state of government in the island. For example, they were able to obstruct the implementation of some of the provisions of Palliser's Act of 1775 which they opposed.<sup>(73)</sup> The nature of government in Newfoundland had the effect of increasing the ambiguity in the merchants' attitude to government in Britain. On the one hand, they resisted changes in Newfoundland, and were disposed to oppose government because of these measures, but, on the other hand, since the changes were so halting, and the merchants were frequently able to deflect their purpose, the opposite tendency, to give general support to government, remained influential. It was not until the administration of the younger Pitt that government measures began to be

clearly seen as a definite policy to modernise the administration of Newfoundland,<sup>(74)</sup> and hostility to this policy resulted in the strong opposition vote in the election of 1790. Government policy towards the improvement of the administration of Newfoundland afterwards resumed its "idle drift" because of the prior claims of the French Wars and other more pressing post-war problems, and it was not until 1824 that further reforms were undertaken.<sup>(75)</sup> Afterwards the government delayed a decision on the question of representative government for Newfoundland until 1832.<sup>(76)</sup> It was therefore understandable that some of the Poole merchants, distracted by the decline of their trade, should have continued to hope until the late 1820s that they would continue to enjoy a privileged position in Newfoundland. As long as this prospect remained, there was thus some reason for these merchants to give general support to the administration.

Another reason for the persistence of this ambivalent attitude amongst the merchants was their comparatively weak influence on central government. Unlike other mercantile interests, especially the West Indian merchants, the Newfoundland trade had no powerful lobby in London or Parliament. The members for Dartmouth and Poole defended its interests and the merchants of both towns collaborated in representations to government.<sup>(77)</sup> However, while ministers normally consulted the trade on measures affecting it, and paid lip service to its importance, it was not given the attention accorded to the West Indian or Indian trades. Thus, for example, the Newfoundland merchants suffered more heavily from the impressment of their seamen than the West Indian merchants.<sup>(78)</sup> The greater favours granted to other mercantile interests did not lead the Poole merchants to adopt a position of outright hostility to government out of resentment. They were of course restrained from doing so partly because of their need for government aid in times of great danger to their trade and because they were able to cling to the privileges they enjoyed in the administration of the fisheries for so long. But it was also the very weakness of their influence with government which prevented them from going into whole-hearted opposition to the administration. Since they lacked a powerful influence, the Newfoundland merchants were never in a position to force the issue of their grievances with government and their relationship with it remained ambivalent.

Local circumstances thus had an important influence on the political behaviour of the Corporation. Nevertheless, there was a shift in the balance of its attitude resulting in far greater independence in its conduct from soon after the mid-18th century. The behaviour of the Corporation in elections, especially from 1761, showed that it was

becoming more self-assertive. As their trade continued to prosper, the merchants gained in self-confidence and political awareness and began to question more closely the effectiveness of their parliamentary representatives, as the Gulstons and Lytteltons discovered. From this, the merchants moved to questioning the government's treatment of their interests and became willing to support opposition members, Mauger, W.M. Pitt and Taylor. The growth of this spirit of independence may be seen as an example of the general increase in provincial self consciousness in the later 18th century. Combined with the decreasing effectiveness of government influence in elections, it resulted in the constituency becoming more open than it had been in the earlier 18th century.<sup>(79)</sup>

In the early 19th century local circumstances continued to play a significant part in shaping the course of politics in the town. They meant that the coming of parliamentary reform had particular effects in Poole. The late emergence of a manorial electoral influence, at a time when such influences were often in retreat, and the virtually final disappointment of hopes for the recovery of the Newfoundland trade and for the survival of the merchants' privileges in Newfoundland, were purely local considerations. They merged with nationally felt aspirations to produce almost unanimous support for parliamentary reform in the town. Even before reform had become a reality this unanimity vanished. Paradoxically, the more enthusiastic supporters of reform were willing to accept aristocratic influence. Their conservative opponents, the supporters of the traditional merchant elite, sought to make an alliance with radicalism, not as generally happened on the issue of 'the condition of the people' and the responsibilities of their employers,<sup>(80)</sup> but on the question of the town's independence from the manorial influence and the need for its special interests to be properly represented in Parliament. These local issues raised particularly strong feelings, not only because of the political advantage the Canford interest had gained from the redrawing of the constituency boundaries in 1832, but also because of the loss of the merchants' hold on Newfoundland, the bleak prospects for the town's economic future and the emphasis placed on the virtues of the town's independence since the end of the 18th century. By 1835 however, the hardening of national political attitudes, exacerbated by deep sectarian divisions in Poole, ended the attempt to forge an alliance between the supporters of the traditional way of life in the town and the radicals. Thereafter, political battles were fought out in Poole between Conservatives and Liberals.

The more uniform structure which the Reform Act brought to politics eventually contributed to the strengthening of national political

consciousness<sup>(81)</sup> but the emergence of national party divisions in Poole in 1835 did not mean that local characteristics ceased to exert important influences on municipal and parliamentary politics in the town, as elsewhere.<sup>(82)</sup> To the contrary, the course of municipal politics in Poole after 1835 was the exact opposite of the national pattern, in which radical control of town councils was "followed by a Conservative revival which quickened in tempo after 1840 and lasted until a short time after the break-up of the Conservative party in 1845-6".<sup>(83)</sup> In parliamentary elections the manorial influence helped to prevent the Conservatives from gaining the successes they made elsewhere in their recovery during the late 1830s and early 1840s. When this influence had decayed and the constituency no longer had a patron, local conflicts within it became even more fierce. Local circumstances were to result in Poole being captured by the Conservatives in 1868, regained by the Liberals in 1874 and retaken by the Conservatives in 1880, quite against the political tide running in these elections.<sup>(84)</sup>

By the 1840s Poole had lost many of the individual characteristics it had possessed a century before. Its geographical isolation had diminished, and was still decreasing with the growth of its neighbour, Bournemouth, and the coming of the railway. Its political and economic importance had suffered a serious decline. Municipal reform had stripped the town of its status as a county in its own right. Parliamentary reform helped to expose it for a time to a stronger aristocratic influence. Little remained of the once extensive Newfoundland trade and, having lost its position as a capital of Newfoundland, Poole was now destined to be long overshadowed by Bournemouth. Nevertheless, the municipal and political life of the town continued to be marked by many distinctive local features.



# FOOTNOTES - CONCLUSION

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6. Chalklin, op. cit., pp. 24-5.
7. Alan Everitt, 'The English Urban Inn', in Alan Everitt, ed., Perspectives in English Urban History, (1973), pp. 114-6; McInnes, op. cit., pp. 17, 20-21.
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10. Borsay, op. cit., p. 581.
11. Hutchins observed that "when the Newfoundland ships came home in 1766 (the town) contained near 7000 inhabitants". J. Hutchins, History of Dorset, (1st Edition, 1774), Vol.I, p. 1. He thus implied that some 3000 people returned from Newfoundland each year, but the majority of these individuals were not residents of Poole. See D.F. Beamish, 'Poole: an 18th Century Survey', Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries, Vol.XXIX, Part 297, (1973), pp.218, 267-9.

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28. Chapter 2, p. 42; Chapter 5, p. 116.
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30. White, op. cit., p. 11; Chalklin, op. cit., pp. 102-12.
31. Jackson, op. cit., p. 310; Chalklin, op. cit., pp. 129-31; Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, op. cit., p. 191.
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APPENDIX A  
CHARTERS AND OTHER GRANTS OF AUTHORITY  
MADE TO THE BOROUGH OF POOLE,  
c. 1248-1688

1. Longespee Charter, granted by William Longespee (1212?-1250), Lord of Canford Manor, attributed to 1248. It recognised Poole as a borough and provided for the burgesses to take part in the election of a port reeve.
2. 7th June, 1341, Inquisition defining the limits of the port of Poole and recognising the port dues levied by the town.
3. 26th April, 1364, Winchelsea Certificate issued by the Mayor and Barons of Winchelsea, a Cinque Port, recognising the limits of the port of Poole.
4. 10th June, 1371, Charter granted by William Montacute (1328-1397), second Earl of Salisbury and Lord of Canford Manor, confirming the previous charter and recognising the Port Reeve as the Mayor.
5. 8th February, 1411, Charter granted by Thomas Montacute (1388-1428), fourth Earl of Salisbury, confirming the charters of 1248 and 1377.
6. 8th July, 1433, Letters Patent creating Poole a port of the staple and licensing its fortification.
7. 1st July, 1453, Charter granted by Henry VI granting a weekly market and two annual fairs.
8. 20th January, 1462, Letters Patent confirming letters patent of 1433.
9. 20th June, 1511, Letters Patent confirming grants made in 1433, 1453 and 1462.
10. February, 1521, grant by the sign manual allowing the purchase of timber from royal forests.
11. 4th September, 1526, Charter granted by the Vice Admiral of England confirming the port's exemption from Admiralty Jurisdiction and rights to "all punishments, corrections, deodands, wavesan, flotsan, jetsan, legasan and wrecks, and all other casualties".
12. 1542, Letters Patent licensing the erection of a windmill and water conduit.
13. 18th February, 1559, Letters Patent confirming the manorial charters of 1248, 1377 and 1411.

APPENDIX A  
(continued)

14. 23rd June, 1568, Charter granted by Elizabeth I creating the Borough a County Corporate.
15. 24th November, 1667, Charter granted by Charles II, confirming the charter of 1568 and giving the Corporation the power to make bye-laws and levy rates.
16. 15th September, 1688, Charter granted by James II, restoring county corporate status, lost in 1684, but reserving to the King the power to dismiss the mayor or any other officer, and suspending the penal laws. (This charter was not accepted by the town because of its objectionable features).
17. 8th December, 1688, Charter granted by James II restoring in full the charters of 1568 and 1667.

## APPENDIX B

## MEETINGS OF THE CORPORATION RECORDED BETWEEN 1740 AND 1835

(Compiled from the Corporation Monthly Meeting Books, 1739-1779,  
1779-1813 and 1813-1835)

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Meetings</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Meetings</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Meetings</u>
1740	11	1772	7	1804	12
1741	5	1773	5	1805	9
1742	11	1774	4	1806	10
1743	11	1775	5	1807	11
1744	8	1776	5	1808	8
1745	5	1777	4	1809	4
1746	7	1778	7	1810	8
1747	3	1779	2	1811	8
1748	5	1780	8	1812	15
1749	2	1781	7	1813	14
1750	9	1782	5	1814	14
1751	5	1783	3	1815	8
1752	1	1784	8	1816	8
1753	3	1785	12	1817	12
1754	2	1786	5	1818	11
1755	4	1787	9	1819	20
1756	3	1788	11	1820	20
1757	7	1789	12	1821	17
1758	10	1790	3	1822	15
1759	4	1791	5	1823	13
1760	2	1792	9	1824	11
1761	4	1793	6	1825	14
1762	2	1794	3	1826	12
1763	5	1795	4	1827	15
1764	11	1796	8	1828	16
1765	12	1797	8	1829	17
1766	4	1798	4	1830	15
1767	8	1799	9	1831	19
1768	7	1800	3	1832	16
1769	10	1801	4	1833	21
1770	7	1802	4	1834	28
1771	8	1803	3	1835	16

# APPENDIX C

## PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE BOROUGH OF POOLE 1790-1831

<u>21st June, 1790</u>	<p>B. Lester (Pittite) - 50  M.A. Taylor (Whig) - 48  Gen. Stuart (Pittite) - 49  Capt. R. Kingsmill (Whig) - 45  Lord Basil Daer (Commonalty) - No votes from burgesses  Lord Haddo (Commonalty) - No votes from burgesses  Lester and Taylor seated by House of Commons</p>
<u>12th March, 1791</u>	<p><u>By-election caused by Lester's resignation as Government contractor</u>  B. Lester (Pittite) - 59  Lord Basil Daer (Commonalty) - 3 and 87 votes from householders</p>
<u>27th May, 1796</u>	<p>General C. Stuart (Pittite)  John Jeffery (Portland Whig)</p>
<u>4th April, 1801</u>	<p><u>By-election caused by death of Stuart</u>  George Garland (Pittite)</p>
<u>5th May, 1801</u>	<p><u>By-election caused by Garland's resignation as Government contractor</u>  George Garland (Pittite)</p>
<u>8th July, 1802</u>	<p>George Garland (Pittite)  John Jeffery (Portland Whig)</p>
<u>31st October, 1806</u>	<p>George Garland (Pittite)  John Jeffery (Portland Whig)</p>
<u>25th May, 1807</u>	<p>Joseph Garland (Independent) - 53  John Jeffery (Portland Whig) - 55  Rear Admiral Sir Richard Bickerton (Portland Whig) - 53</p>
<u>24th February, 1808</u>	<p><u>By-election caused by double return in 1807</u>  Rear Admiral Sir Richard Bickerton (Portland Whig)</p>
<u>? February, 1809</u>	<p><u>By-election caused by Jeffery's resignation on appointment as Consul General at Lisbon</u>  Benjamin Lester-Lester (Independent) - 56  John Blackburn (Canningite?) - 28</p>
<u>8th October, 1812</u>	<p>Benjamin Lester-Lester (Independent)  M.A. Taylor (Carlton House Whig)</p>



APPENDIX C  
(continued)

19th June, 1818

Benjamin Lester-Lester (Independent Whig)  
- 56  
John Dent (Canningite) - 48  
Christopher Spurrier (Independent) - 33

8th March, 1820

Benjamin Lester-Lester (Independent Whig)  
John Dent (Canningite)

12th June, 1826

Benjamin Lester-Lester (Independent Whig)  
- 82  
Hon. W.F. S. Ponsonby (Whig) - 53  
H.C. Sturt (Tory) - 33

30th July, 1830

Benjamin Lester-Lester (Independent Whig)  
Hon. W.F.S. Ponsonby (Whig)

6th October, 1831

By-election caused by resignation of  
Ponsonby

Lt. General Sir John Byng (Whig) - 56  
Charles Augustus Tulk (Independent Tory-  
Radical) - 42

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- (iv) Private collections

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- (ii) Calendars
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